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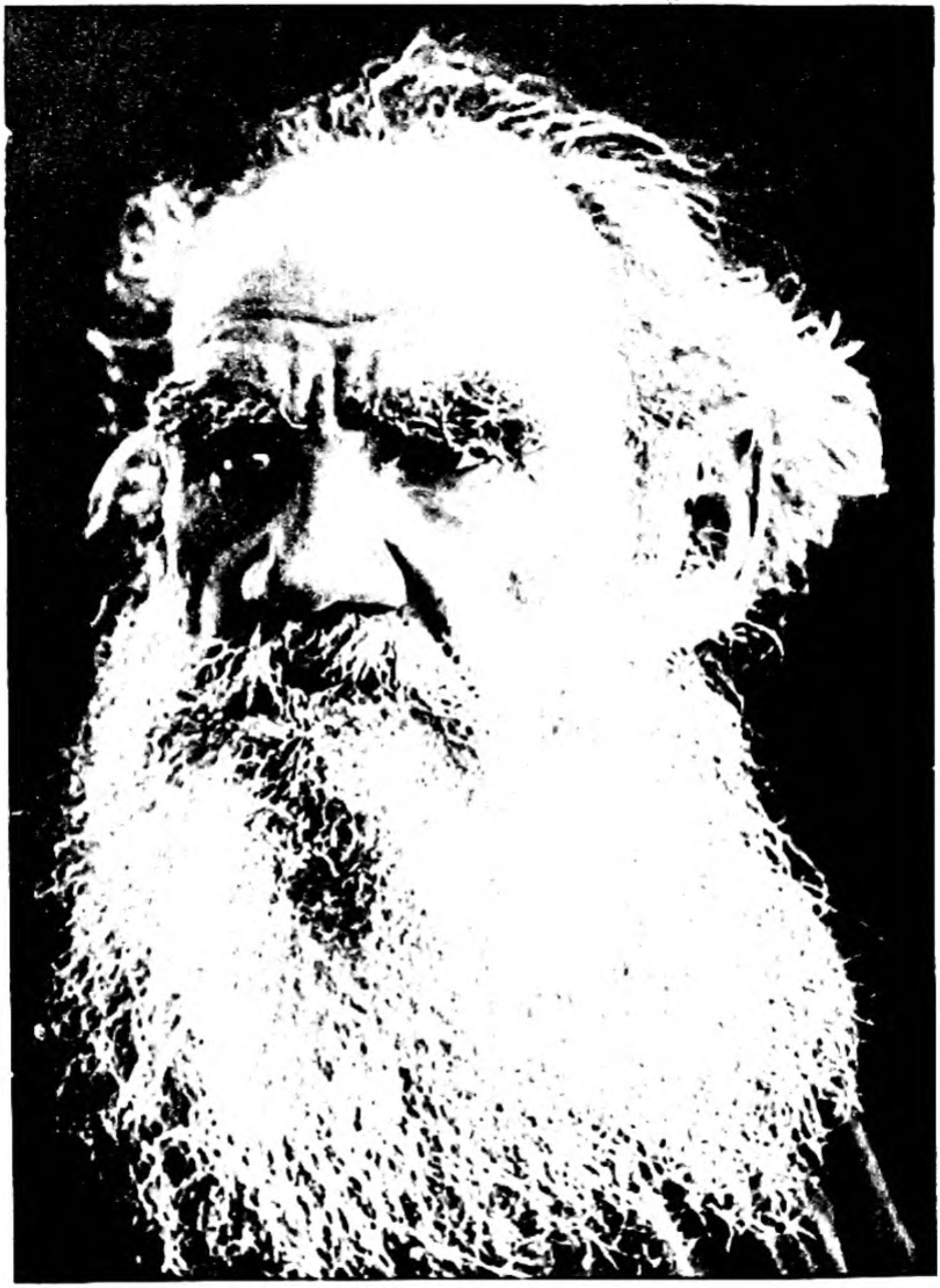

Левъ Толстой

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN
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Leonid Leonov

THOUGHTS ABOUT TOLSTOI

Address delivered on November 19, 1960, at a memorial meeting held in the Bolshoi Theatre to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the death of L. N. Tolstoi

Esteemed guests,

Dear friends and comrades,

Fifty years ago, on the verge of winter, 1910, an event took place in our country which deeply concerned its contemporaries. One rainy night, as morning was approaching, the writer Lev Tolstoi left his estate at Yasnaya Polyana and disappeared. Except for a few trusted persons, no one in Russia knew either his destination or the true reasons that had moved him to leave his long-accustomed home.

Four days of wandering, at times under pouring rain, brought the great old man to an obscure way station. Illness, a stranger's bed, publicity. People begin to arrive: clergy, peasants, newsreel operators, gendarmes. They stand about at a respectful distance from the timbered building, while, inside, Lev Tolstoi faces his death. They are all impatient to carry out what duty bids in time of trouble. Father Varsonofy tries persistently to get inside, to bless the excommunicated thinker before his departure on the long journey from which there is no returning. Six poods of medicines for the sick writer are sent to Astapovo express from Moscow, by train No. 3 of the Ryazan-Urals Railway. The Church and civilization he has repudiated stand confused, dismayed. Then the fatal night. Black murk outside the windows. Morphia, camphor, oxygen. The last sip of water—for the journey. At a quarter to six, Goldenweiser whispers through the window the sad tidings that are to spread the world over before day has dawned. The sun has set.

Europe sends verbal wreaths to the graveside of genius. His name is paired with those of Homer, Luther, Buddha. And at Yasnaya Polyana—bleak, grey-white stillness. The frozen mud of the road beneath the junipers; a hundred pilgrims shivering by the gates—and, round about, all Russia, with bared head. "They're coming!" The grave closes in around and over him. When twilight falls, a mound has appeared on the hillock among the nine young oaks—the mound that likens the most unlike of biographies. It was November, the most sunless month of what was, perhaps, the darkest year Russia had known since the turn of the century. The days were shortening, the winter frosts gripping the land; but advanced minds in Russia already glimpsed the dawn through this similitude of night.

Thus it is in a forest when a giant pine has been felled: a dull booming hangs long over the earth; and then, for a while, birds—foliage—the very saws—are still. The forest has lost in stature, mankind in wealth. By the duration of this hush may be measured the weight of the loss felt by those who remain behind. Twice again—after fourteen and after twenty-six years—was my generation to experience this grievous sense of desolation, which, like all happenings of nation-wide significance, makes the motherland one close, united home.

Such men on the captain's bridge of a nation's thought inspire their contemporaries with confidence in the present and fearless expectation of the future. The part that Tolstoi played in our public thinking has been repeatedly stressed by Russian writers. Ten years before Tolstoi died, Chekhov wrote from Yalta: ". . . I fear Tolstoi's death. If he were to die, a great emptiness would form in my life . . . without him, our literature would become a flock without a shepherd." Twenty years earlier still, Ivan Turgenev had expressed similar thoughts; and two years before Tolstoi died, the same fear came to Alexander Blok. Nor was it only the advanced intellectuals who felt themselves orphaned, I should say even deprived of head and leadership, by Tolstoi's death. Plebeian Russia, too, felt the loss of Tolstoi. True, conditions in those times were such that it was only by long and roundabout paths that even the most far-famed works of literature reached the lower classes. Not infrequently, the people's idea of a writer, in his lifetime, was based on nothing more than rumour of his conduct as a member of society. But Tolstoi had lived his whole life in full view of the people, throwing himself open to the inmost corners of his soul—now in his own name, now as Olenin, or Levin, or Nekhlyudov—advancing always against the prevailing winds and currents, combating unrighteous wealth, idleness, and violence, combating the accumulated monstrosities of a civilization grown senile. And inasmuch as his life was long, progressive minds among the people grew accustomed to the consoling thought that a heart beat somewhere near which could not be corrupted; that a watchful eye saw their inhuman labour and privations; that a listening ear heard their moans and their songs—and that in time, consequently, all this would be transmuted into purest gold, enriching the common treasure-house of the new world of the future.

For it is the thoughts and inspirations, the hopes and conquered doubts of their age that constitute the gold fund of the different literatures; and a literature's vital powers depend entirely upon the degree to which it is saturated with the historical experience of its contemporaries, drawn—for talent, from the treasury of the nation; for genius, from that of all mankind. All our writings, even those of the spoiled favourites of their day, go down into the grave with those who created them. A book must lie its appointed time in the earth, which in the darkness—while young growths flaunt and triumph overhead—will strip it mercilessly of the rouge and ringlets of transient fashion, of the smoothing putty of false optimism. So it was with Marlinsky, Kukolnik, Ozerov, who in their lifetimes had been issued certificates of immortality. Yes, and in Pushkin's day there was a poet by the name of Timofeyev, whom Senkovsky hailed as genius unsurpassed—the author of that unforgettable composition, *Beard of Mine, Dear Beard of Mine!* In a word, it is only the purest of gold that withstands the acid test of oblivion.

Tolstoi's writings are among those few that have never been subjected to this test of time—like those of Pushkin's whom our people everywhere have adopted, so to speak, for eternity.

The hills of Georgia in sombre night are veiled
Below, the swift Aragva purls its song,
My wishful mood is light, my sadness is elate
To you my melancholy thoughts belong...

Lines like these in a nation's poetry—once written, never to be repeated—remain for centuries after an imperishable tuning fork for the lyres of rising generations. These two, in Russia's Pantheon, occupy a place apart. Pushkin revealed to us the wondrous music of our native tongue. Tolstoi, with its assistance, expressed as none other has ever been able to express the deeds, the joys and sorrows, of the Russian people—including their fabulous single combat with many-tongued, Napoleon-dominated Europe; and with the aid of these historical examples demonstrated the workings, since so many times verified, of the heroic transformations brought about, both in nations and in individual peaceful souls, by struggle in a just cause. To the author of *War and Peace*, *Cossacks*, *Anna Karenina*, and *Resurrection*, all speaks distinctly—raging storm and imperceptible breeze; things too vast to be encompassed by the normal human eye, and seemingly little things, that escape the casual glance; the noonday majesty and the evening of the human personality. Again, Tolstoi's own life, troubled and abounding in contradictions, helped him to see the human heart in the most unexpected cross-sections; and, of course, no one else since Rousseau has laid this heart so wide open for the reader. Today, at a distance of half a century, we have no need of flood-lights to show us Tolstoi in all his giant stature—the stature not only of what he accomplished, but of his vacillations, his extremes and errors, inevitable in the path of seekers after truth, for truth has never yet revealed itself to any human unadulterated.

What this man was transcends the bounds even of outstanding literary lives. One feels ashamed, Belinsky said, to speak of Pushkin in humble prose. Just so, the name of Tolstoi must in our day be set in festive verbal framework. This name belongs in the list—it is hardly a full dozen, beginning with the ancient cradle days of our culture—of the greatest masters of literature. His labour impresses us as a veritable labour of Hercules. He is a mountain along the high road of progress, from whose summit one may view the age-old trails and spaces of human thought. They are all his collocutors there—from very Thales onward! And at this point I ought by rights to dwell upon the unfading charm of Tolstoi's characters, and in the process to draw the textbook analogy between Tatyana Larina and Natasha Rostova; slurring over the difficulties of Tolstoi's spiritual seekings, to make passing mention of his all-absorbing pantheism, and at the same time to stress his knowledge of life—somewhat too often brought up in our day, for, in all truth, knowledge of life is not only one of the concomitants of any assumption of literary honesty, but a professional necessity in our craft—a knowledge, in Tolstoi, so thoroughgoing, so deeply penetrating, that many a page of his writings seems a handful of the still-warm substance of daily life, dipped up from the very depths of the realities of his day. It would be fitting, in this connection, to go once more into Lenin's remark on that most powerful denunciatory aspect of Tolstoi's writings constituted by his "most sober realism, the tearing down of all and sundry masks."

To us writers of the present day it would be of benefit, too, to dwell on the amazing precision of Tolstoi's thinking, and the adjustment to this thinking of Tolstoi's language—a language knotty and astringent at times, carrying within it a whirlwind of unpronounced appraisals and psychological intonations; a language so capacious, with so ringing an echo, that it helps the reader not only to plunge into the depths of the pages down the ladder of lines, but, when the book has been read, to wander still in its charmed environs; a language that is sometimes difficult, perhaps, compelling us, as Chekhov put it, to clamber up sheer verbal cliffs—and more than repaying our effort, each time, by the view that opens out before us from the top. It would also be fitting to list the factors behind Tolstoi's so mighty fecundating influence on European literatures, and at the same time to demonstrate, by a selection of brilliant examples, how Tolstoi's poetic achievements affected our national character, and how, on the other hand, the sweep, the persistence, the depth, and other qualities of the Russian character were manifested in Tolstoi's works. All this is essential to an understanding of the exclusive place Tolstoi occupies in the current of world culture; and that is why such a multitude of books has been devoted to Tolstoi's major prose, not only in Russian, but in other languages.

No less has been written, particularly abroad, concerning those other volumes of Tolstoi to which we refer so much less frequently. And there are those among researchers abroad whose aim, quite frankly expressed, is to represent Tolstoi as the vehicle of ideas which, as we see it, in no way accord with his real views on the laws of society and civilization of his day. In part this has been due to our long neglect of that portion of Tolstoi's heritage which lies outside the bounds of his major prose. We ourselves yielded him up, so to speak, to the mercies of arbitrary, and in many cases dishonest, interpretation of his spiritual seekings. In view of certain circumstances which have become aggravated in our day, I am prompted even in these most brief reflections on Tolstoi to take up this theme, by some imagined to be secondary; for these works too, no less than Tolstoi's major prose, open up windows into the writer's spacious spiritual dwelling, with its endless rooms and galleries—and these windows are not curtained. A term that insistently suggests itself here is: Tolstoi's lesser, or preceptive, prose. In distinction from his fundamental masterpieces, each of which is bound up very precisely with definite stages in Russia's life, these purely abstract writings are not dated in any way. They include brief stories, written in the restrained style of menology legends, evincing at times an ascetic renunciation of the author's usual manner of writing. They are in every case models of laconism and simplicity. Through their poignantly human lines sounds the voice—so uncharacteristic of Tolstoi—of the wandering pilgrim who, after quaffing of the deceptive cup of life, has at last found peace from the passing temptations of the world. Every people that has been battered in the storms of history has its own keg of such living water, by drinking from which—and not only in time of shipwreck—parched lips may on occasion benefit. One gets the impression that with these tiny tales, each no more than a sip, Tolstoi was trying to quench man's age-old thirst for truth—and in so doing to outline something in the order of a religious and moral code, capable of solving for centuries to come all those social, international, family, and other troubles which have accumulated in man's life as a result of his protracted violation of some divine truth.

In these fifty years a definite, if unspoken, view has taken shape towards these stories: that, with Tolstoi's extensive religious and philosophical writings, they constitute the least interesting—to the general reader—part of Tolstoi's all but infinite heritage. Yet, from the point of view of Tolstoi's general methods, many of these works are so highly suited to serve as epigraphs to Tolstoian novels that they may well be regarded as the seeds of vast new plans, never fated to germinate. The writing of books, to such men as Tolstoi, is rather a severe and demanding mission than a profession—as, of course, all work will be when, under communism, those who work have learned to approach creatively the occupation of being humans on this earth. The works of such writers constitute a sort of rendering of account of their labours upon their giant personalities—chapters in their spiritual biographies. Aside from his main theme, set by his effort upon the intellectual agenda of his age, every great artist—so far as I can understand it—is at the same time the vehicle of his own personal problem, at times irreproachably hidden away; and it is this problem, its intricate spiritual tangle, that he is engaged in unravelling from beginning to end of his creative development. It seems to me, even, that with such artists these things are closely intertwined, the one unquestionably indicating the presence of the other—as kimberlite formations indicate the presence of diamond deposits. We all know of Gogol's tragic problem. Tolstoi, too, had his problem; and it is there that we must seek the answer to the riddle—whether it was to escape life or, on the contrary, to meet life that Tolstoi left his home ten days before his death.

Debate may arise as to the propriety of so free a treatment of Tolstoi's leading theme. But even in that grief-stricken week, just half a century ago, when the flowers had not yet faded on Tolstoi's fresh grave, the opinions of his contemporaries so widely differed that on one and the same day, the day of burial, Hauptmann proclaimed Tolstoi the greatest Christian, and Maeterlinck—the greatest atheist, of the age, both being right only in one thing: their choice of adjective. All the more, then, to my mind, is the later generation entitled to its independent understanding of a phenomenon that it can view more fully, free of petty, distracting detail, at a distance of half a century—even if that understanding come belatedly, and if it be, as it probably is, no less imperfect!

Apart from the glum winter morning outside the window, and the rustle of the newspaper that brought the news of Tolstoi's death, what I remember most clearly—I was a boy of ten at the time—is the talk that went on among my elders, the contradictory voices of rumour and conjecture concerning Tolstoi's departure from his home. Nor was this mere prying, philistine curiosity. Everyone realized that Tolstoi's action had come as the culmination of long years of a strange inner struggle—a struggle that had been observed not only by the educated world, with its European ways of thinking, but also by the awakening minds of plebeian Russia. I lived in an environment in which this occurrence was discussed with lively interest, as a social riddle of the first importance. There were those among the tireless students of the newspapers who saw Tolstoi's departure as the attempt of a sage to rid himself of the iniquitous excesses of his environment, of the shackling burden of worldly cares; and others, with an inclination for theological philosophizing, who saw it as a soul-saving flight from a life of vanity and unearned luxury to long-wished-for peace in company only with his soul, and—perhaps—with God. All these guesses would have seemed quite probable in the light of Tolstoi's constantly-expressed moods—were it not for the direction of his flight.

I recall my own muddled bewilderment, in early and less early youth, in regard to Tolstoi's preceptive literature. Above all else: what was it that prompted this complex, self-willed, world-famed artist, whose every line, no sooner written, appeared in dozens of translations into foreign tongues—what could have prompted him to resort to a method of influencing his contemporaries which, though it might seem more capable of reaching simple minds, as many think even in our day, was actually far less effective, due to its frank over-simplification? The answer, it seemed to me, lay in the fact that Tolstoi's preceptive stories, like his articles of the same type, though alternating with his major works, were written chiefly in the latter period of his creative work, when the forest of life, so thick at the first, was beginning to thin out, and—if only, as yet, in the artist's anticipation—the hazy border of the final unknown was beginning to glimmer mysteriously ahead. It was somewhere about there, I think, that Tolstoi began to experience his periodic horror in the face of the final inevitability: that "Arzamas fear"—named for the town in which it first occurred—that seemed to swallow up the very will to live. For, after all, the time was already nearing; and the artist's heavy pen could not keep pace with the work of his eager mind, which sought to touch upon all and everything, to comprehend it and enrich it with higher understanding, and then hasten on; which "sought to catch the things that flow through us, instantaneously, on the wing, in order to take its bearings in the flow of being, for without such bearings one is liable to lose one's way cruelly in this blinding murky space." Such was the form my thoughts took in those days; and approximately such, only simpler, are my thoughts today. A true work of art, and of literature particularly, is always an invention in form and a discovery in content; and that requires time. As distinguished from the pumpkin, which in one season attains praiseworthy results, a work of the literary arts must be cultivated like a fruit-tree. Like love, it takes its beginnings in a faint presentiment, in a tiny seed sown in the furrow of the spirit. And after that it must be long nourished with the soul's sap, and its new-grown crown must be carefully tended—but ruthlessly thinned where it grows too thick—in constant trembling for the harvest, so uncertain in our continental climate. In a word, when Tolstoi came out as a humble sower of seed among the people, was it not because he was in haste to empty his overfilled basket before the sun went down—be the seed even snowed under, fall it even on souls unploughed for its reception.

And his haste was the greater in that time was growing short. Heat lightning, heralding approaching storm, flashed ever and again in Russia's skies. A nation-wide break-up of the old foundations was nearing; and foamcrests, soundless as yet, but angrily seething, appeared in ever greater number on the waves of the people's sea. More perceptibly with every year, the Russian subsoil, only yesterday—as people had believed—so unshakably firm, was coming into motion, not only underfoot, but in the consciousness of Tolstoi's contemporaries. In the latter half of the eighteen-nineties the flame of revolt leaped from the workers' settlements to the Russian countryside. In literary salons the whisper went about that "the peasants are out, with their hatchets. Fearful things are coming!" In steady succession, revolutionary martyrs mounted the scaffold. The ignorance, the indigence, the inhuman labour of the lower classes weighed heavily on Tolstoi's conscience. As early as 1865, on the eve of one of Russia's repeated famines, Tolstoi had hinted obscurely in a letter to Fet that, should trouble begin, "it will reach us too!" "Us"—that is, the ruling classes and the Church! Another of this generation of the classics of Russian literature, slightly older than Tolstoi, felt no less keenly than he this chill prescience of the future; and the terror it inspired in him found clear expression in what was not the least excellent of his novels. Dostoyevsky was tormented by fear for what might become of the human soul, should the ancient edifice of world-wide Christianity come crashing down on to the civilization that in the course of two thousand years had taken such firm and fruitful root in its shelter. But Tolstoi at this same time was striving, like the Biblical Samson, to thrust apart the hampering columns, already marked with the telltale network of historical sclerosis; striving to bring them down—in the final account—upon himself, upon the world of his own class! More strongly than his great contemporary, he sensed the urgent need of social change, first and foremost for the cloyed privileged class to which he himself belonged, and not only for the labouring people, who, according to Tolstoi, were the true yeast of life, yet who in all religions are for some reason or other made the chief object of tutelage and preachment. To live as he had been living grew harder and harder for Tolstoi, seemed to him more and more bitter and dishonest. "Wherever I go—shame and suffering!"—burst one day from his pen. And once, out for a ride, he passed a row of peasants, stooped, impersonal, grey with the dust of the road. They were breaking stones at the roadside. "It was like running the gauntlet!"—he wrote in his diary, and the words were written, as his habit was, with his heart's blood. Altogether, it is an amazing thing how powerfully, how constantly this great man felt upon himself the people's intent gaze—no, not tearful, even in the most cruel of misfortune; only narrowed a little—the gaze of his indigent younger brother, full of restrained, but wrathful mockery, and, behind that, incredulous wonder at human heartlessness. One can well imagine the contemptuous look which the people of Black Africa turn today upon their white elder brothers, radiant with the light of Christian humanism—overstayed guests, stubbornly reluctant to clear out of the Africans' desolate huts.

Tolstoi's efforts to comprehend life began in his youth, in the form of doubts and reflections concerning himself, in the form of attempts at self-restriction, in the form of those youthful inquiries as to the essence of being which even the best-informed, the most confident of the sciences, when the inquirer is intelligent, are powerless to answer. Even in the years of his tumultuous young manhood, beneath the rainbow film of worldly pleasures, it smouldered within him, never for a moment dying—this live ember of self-disgust at his own weaknesses, physical and moral. As a boy of fifteen Tolstoi called himself a pupil of Rousseau; and this spark of self-analysis, hesitant at the first, flamed to full power in the writer's years of maturity, when, like the great Encyclopaedist, and with no lesser measure of understanding of humankind, Tolstoi created a new Confession—an impassioned, third-degree self-examination, more merciless, perhaps, than that of Augustine, originator of this rare literary genre. Approximately, we may date the beginning of the transition from dream to practical realization: when Levin's happiness, brief enough in any case, is clouded over by his first thoughts about man's place in life, and then, in the last pages of the novel, the clouds are dispersed by saving contact with the patriarchal agricultural idyll. It becomes Levin's aim "to give the millions the possibility of understanding one and the same truths, that by these truths they may build up the life of the soul, for which alone is life worth living." This is nothing less than a vow to self, a vow, whatever the cost, to attain understanding of the meaning of life; and Tolstoi and Levin set about this task determined, should they fail to discover any worthy use for life, to mete out to themselves the most bitter and painful of penalties, to punish themselves by self-willed deprivation of the gift of life. And so wholly was Tolstoi possessed by this passion to find truth for all his brothers on earth, so confident did he become that the direction he had chosen was the right one, that at the age of thirty-seven, in that same diary of his most intimate thoughts, he meditated upon the creation of a new religion, "consonant with the development of man." This impulse alone, perhaps, might have sufficed the giant for the fulfilment of his vow, had the times been earlier—in the days, let us say, of natural economy, when there were prophets who succeeded, purely by the flame of their preaching, by the lash of severity, by the power of example, in attaining for their nomad followers a certain degree of well-being, spiritual and material. From this time on, the ember that had been smouldering within began to scorch the paper under the artist's pen, bursting out to the surface in flame. Tolstoi's doctrine, so-called, had come into being.

One is struck by the strange similarity of epilogue in the creative biographies of Gogol and Tolstoi. Both, towards the end, gave themselves up to impassioned Christianity, to the detriment of their fundamental poetic labours; in respect to both, attempts were made to recall them to their interrupted art; in the writings of both, volumes appeared that were less read than others, or not read at all; both burnt what they had written at their best—one of them literally, in his stove on Nikitsky Boulevard; the other in the raging flame of self-slander, in his Confession, where he termed his masterpieces mercenary idleness, vain cogitations. And in regard to both, finally, this activity evoked condemnation, of almost equal sharpness, on the part of the progressive minds of their respective times. Tolstoi, incidentally, thought very highly indeed of certain passages in Gogol's *Correspondence with Friends*. However, for all the surface similarity of their spiritual and philosophical seekings—characteristic, generally speaking, of all the Russian classics—it was flames of very differing nature that consumed these two. Gogol's tragic letter to the monk-priest Matvei throws a light on the pathological side of the burning of *Dead Souls*, on the illness—not purely literary—that was destroying Gogol. The more striking, then, to my mind, the difference between this midnight flame and Tolstoi's midday blaze, which did not hinder the creation, in the evening of his life, of his brilliant *Resurrection*. True, in the second part of this novel there are passages which to the eye of the professional writer seem charred, if I may so put it—spots in which this blaze of wrath and outraged conscience licked at Tolstoi's inspiration, to the detriment of his living art. And whereas Gogol turned away from his fellow men to darkness and monasticism, Tolstoi was drawn all his life through to that eternal holiday, the joy of creation—was drawn to the mass, the flooding current, of the common people.

It is a difficult—indeed, a dangerous—undertaking, of course, in so cursory an essay, to attempt solution of the problem presented by this great writer, equalled by none in the half-century that has passed since his death. Attempts to survey at a glance phenomena of such magnitude almost invariably portray the weakness of the surveyor himself, his limited possibilities, rather than the lofty object of his examination. If you get down to it, such surveys would be best dispensed with! But Tolstoi's works have given rise in the world to ideological differences that as yet show no sign of fading—differences extending far beyond the bounds of pure literary criticism. It is not only in our country that Tolstoi's memory is being honoured today. At this very moment, perhaps, malice-filled minds somewhere are attempting, with the aid of carefully picked quotations from Tolstoi, to cast moral aspersions upon our motherland, to which Lev Tolstoi so wholly belonged, and which he so extolled. And these attacks will be launched, most probably, from the point of view of Tolstoian Christianity, so-called: Tolstoi's development of the Gospel verse "Resist not evil," which formed a tie between Tolstoi's humanism and a far more ancient moral code—one that took its rise in a certain heaven-blessed land of eternal summer, far removed from our northern frosts and invasions, lying in the shelter of the world's loftiest mountain ramparts. Mention, of course, and no less condemnatory, will be made of the stages—unavoidable in this soiled and sinful world—passed through by the Socialist Revolution, without which, be it added, the map of colonial Asia and Africa, so merrily rainbowcoloured today, would still be confined to a dreary two or three European shades. Never a one of these so estimable studies, however, gives any hint as to how, and by what means, the living are to protect their homes and children against the evil that remains so tireless, against the past, with its evident desire to slam the door behind it brutally as it leaves our planet never to return. In such conditions, non-resistance is practicable only if there is someone else, a strong and courageous friend, who will take upon himself the sin and heroism of resistance to the world's evil on behalf of all the world's humiliated and oppressed.

A strange Christianity, it will be admitted, that of the writer Lev Tolstoi, who renounced its rites at the age of seventeen; a doubtful Christianity, that of this Tolstoi, against whom the Church was compelled officially to defend itself by excommunication, that is, by public anathema pronounced from the country's pulpits, which—while less severe than divestment of civil honour on the scaffold, enacted to beating drums by the executioner—could not but affect Count Tolstoi's comfort in his accustomed environment, and complicate his relations with the patriarchal peasantry that was so dear to his heart. It was not to the hermit's cell that Tolstoi's religion called him, not to the desert of selfish isolation from life's vain bustle—no, it was to work for the well-being of his fellow men, in the name of goodness and peace; to that utter closeness with the simple people to which every socially-thinking personality of any magnitude aspires. We need but read the text of the Holy Synod's pronouncement of excommunication, of February 22, 1901, listing Tolstoi's heresies—for every one of which, three centuries ago, people were burnt at the stake in the squares of Europe without much ado. We must, then, seek some other designation for Tolstoi's spiritual seekings, which, as Lenin expressed it, culminated in the "striving completely to sweep away the official Church, the landlords and the landlord government, to destroy all the old forms of landownership and land tenure, to clear the ground, to replace the police-class state by a community of free and equal small peasants."

No, what we have here is not the vigils of an ascetic, tormented—as Gogol must have been—by nocturnal visions in the spirit of Nekrasov's Uncle Vlas. What we see is direct revolt against the shoddy trappings and incantations of the Church—a revolt, much in Vasily Buslayev's rebel spirit, of that force, not to be ruled by any outside power, that Gorky's keen eye noted in Tolstoi. "Beguiled by pride of intellect," as the text of the excommunication expressed it, Tolstoi was shaking the dogmatic pillars of religion. It must be remembered that the Church, like all societies of religious type, demands of the believer, before he can be admitted to its temple, complete renunciation of independent thinking, that is, of all remnant of individuality; and to attain this—and with no other purpose whatever—leads him through trial labyrinths of obscure and irrational dogma. Reason must inevitably retreat; and the clearest expression of such capitulation is to be found in Tertuilian's famed proclamation (one can picture his frenzy, his foam-flecked lips) of his fanatical faith in the impossible—in other words, his readiness in the name of Providence to plunge into the murk of insanity. In contrast to the Roman divine stand Tolstoi's clear words: "I want to reach such understanding that every inexplicable thesis present itself to me as a necessary conclusion of reason, and not as something in which duty compels belief."

Nowhere in the exposition of Tolstoi's faith, so-called, do we find theological meditations upon the mystic qualities of the superior being; yet these are incumbent upon faith. Nor do we find any effort to inscribe this being in the universe by means of mystic algebra, as the fathers of the Church undertook to do. All of Tolstoi's preachments come of the desire, by common human effort, to establish honest and unfading joy in man's soul, laid desolate by vain and altogether needless suffering. For every word in Tolstoi's philosophical terminology, even for a term so far removed, it might seem, from our modern times as "kingdom of God," we can find a reliable synonym in the present-day vocabulary of humanism. Immortality, for example, in Tolstoi's letter to the Englishman Campbell, is treated essentially as the eternal gratitude of the living for benefits received by them. And the obligation to do good, as Tolstoi saw it, arises not from fear of the canonical punishment beyond the grave, but from the natural and feasible right of every human soul to its share of happiness. It is further on that the differences arise—differences as to the road by which this right is to be attained! The root of these differences lies in differing points of view as to whether it is being that determines consciousness, or the other way around. But for thousands of years, after all, the skies above man's head and the watery spaces of the oceans at his feet have been so vast and clear that each has been able to find in them his own reflection, as his own mind and stature dictated. And has not the entire history of philosophy consisted precisely in this unceasing debate as to the source of the flame of life and thought within us: as to whether man sets it burning by rubbing sticks together; or whether it is born with him, lit for eternity within his soul; or whether—poor creature—he must steal it from the gods ever and anew?

And so, he was entirely a son of Earth, this Lev Tolstoi, persistent toiler and man of pride, who set the full strength of his shoulders under the voluntary and fascinating burden of struggle and anxiety for his fellow men; nor should it be regarded as discreditable, in men of Tolstoi's stature, if their heads attain too often to the firmament. As he himself said, he was one of those people who "would be glad, perhaps, not to think and not to give expression to what fills their souls, yet cannot help but do these things, compelled to them by two irresistible forces: their own inner need, and the demand of others." A great artist, he was at the same time a man endowed with an insatiable love of life—a man who at the age of fifty undertook a study of the dead languages, that he might be able to read at first hand the sources of generally accepted truths. Life's every sound evoked rolling echoes in his soul. Nothing escaped his eager, active attention—the philosophy of history, the class structure of the state, the problems of pedagogy and child training, capital punishment, famine along the Volga, money and land ownership in Russia, the troubles of the Dukhobor sect, questions of religious tolerance, immortality, love, and will. The exchange of visits of Russian and French sailors brought about by the play of politics in 1894 aroused Tolstoi to sarcastic generalizations filling three printed sheets. Everything in his day concerned the genius; every phenomenon evoked endeavours to chart it, logically and morally, in order to condemn or justify. He ploughed the soil, laid stoves, made boots, to attain that higher knowledge—through muscular experience—which to the writer is immeasurably more important than book knowledge, not to speak of knowledge by hearsay. In his very appearance, he called to mind the familiar, the eternal traits of that other, no less insatiable, student of life—Leonardo, who had the same way of striding through his age, setting creative thought aseethe about him. The much-talked-of Arzamas fright that from time to time attacked Tolstoi arose from an altogether earthly, bodily protest against the ruthless means to which Nature resorts to erase the wondrous characters and visions she herself has traced, that there be room for ever new ones flowing in from the starry spaces—a protest against death, the thought of which is so apt to frequent people of the most excellent spiritual health, often in the brilliant noonday of their lives. Pages from *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* come involuntarily to mind. How the author must have loved life, to be able so to describe death! It occurs to me that it must have been just such an oppressive prescience, arising at the uttermost limit of creative vision, a prescience not so much of the darkness of the grave, as of the idiocy of the inevitable destruction from which neither craft nor power, neither money nor ramparts have the power to save—the sacrilegious inactivity of mind and muscle, the parting with the beloved phantoms and delusions of earthly life—that prompted Gorky to write *Yegor Bulychov*. In just such fear must the lone drop of water rise to the frigid skies, and wander through the empty blue, and fall, and lose itself in the murk of the infernal depths—until, one day, it comes to realize itself as an envoy of the eternal mother sea. And the realization of this life-giving tie, the companionship of multitudes of others like us, hastening with us through space, reveals to us all at once the significance of that gay and unexampled joy that has been granted us: the joy of riding in turbulent fury at the crest of the storm wave, the joy of glittering in the rainbow, the joy of burbling in the springtime brook, and of crashing down with the great rains of July upon the dry, thirsty fields!

As early as twenty-eight years before his death Tolstoi, disillusioned in the system of life that surrounded him, saw the highest satisfaction of existence not in lordly idleness, not in amusements or even in books, but in utter merging with the myriad drops that make up the human sea—in this case, the peasant sea. This view was fostered by Tolstoi's long years of idealization of the agricultural way of life, and by the bitter feeling of guilt that never left him, a feeling provoked by his every partaking of the good things of life—the guilt of the nobility towards the plundered, beggared people. At that period, it must be remembered, while "life, thrown into chaos by the reform, was in the process of settling down," the whole of the peasantry suffered from the unsettled state of the land question and other problems. What Tolstoi felt was an almost unconditional partiality for the Russian peasantry—more, a sort of blind idolization of their meagre life, innocent of depraving plenty; envy, almost, of their illiteracy, of their thoroughgoing ignorance, as though this could provide sanctuary to the impatient intellect, as though there were as much as a chink on all our earth free of the doubts, the divisions, and the consequent eternal battle of opposites which secure the harmonious development of all life. Was it not Tolstoi's idea of good to turn away from unclean, vice-stained civilization and plunge into the thick of the people, plunge into Nature, serene and undisturbed; to cling close to her eternal breast, where, in utter, childlike purity, the ways of life and the climate of human history were to be moulded? Always, in Tolstoi's works, the author's sympathies are with the mass of the people. We need only recall the state of mind of Olenin and Nekhlyudov, in his earlier works, or, in his later writings, his own attitude towards Gerasim and Akim. The sage Karatayev is a simple soldier, and Pierre Bezukhov has no greater desire than to be a soldier, a simple soldier. And inasmuch as Pyotr Khelchitsky, an unknown writer dating back five hundred years, had in his day produced a book which Tolstoi pronounced "intelligent, sincere, and powerful, and clear to the point of naïveté"—why, he too must have been a tiller of the soil! No sooner does the question come up of peace and happiness on earth than we encounter between the lines the familiar tune of moral perfection, of self-restriction, yes, and of the bread, salt with the sweat of labour, that alone can satisfy the spiritual hunger which torments us! An aphorism of Grigory Skovoroda's that Tolstoi was very fond of—most probably for its ascetic simplicity—comes involuntarily to mind: "Thanks be to God that all that is needed is not difficult, and all that is difficult is not needed." And even on his deathbed in the little room at Astapovo, when all his attachments in this world, all his life's companions, and the wanderer's pack that was his choice—when all had been left behind, what piercing anguish filled the last words that the newsmen were to record from his stiffening lips: "No, this is not how peasants die!" And in this dying regret, whispered through clenched teeth, we find the expression of Tolstoi's entire philosophy of living—that life must be so built that we may leave it without torment, as do all those fortunate unsophisticates, the trees, and the birds, and the tillers of the soil: without lies, or fear, or looking backward, without complaint, and without twinge of conscience. And this throws a somewhat different light on Tolstoi's departure from his home, that dark night on the eve of winter.

Memory and crumbling paper keep alive the painful details of his last years at Yasnaya Polyana; but no—it was not in family misunderstandings that the reason lay, nor in his unhappy wife, who, with a houseful of children on her hands, had yet found the energy to copy out over and over again—for you and for me!—the endlessly corrected manuscripts that came from Tolstoi's hand. How we have always wanted, truly, to brush all this aside, as one brushes aside annoying motes of dust, that it might not haze over Tolstoi's beloved visage, not hinder our contemplation of him! And generally—is it not about time an end were put to the pigmy habit of thrusting prying nose and fingers into every detail of our giants' private lives? To this day, one comes upon new instances of that old standby—communications from under Pushkin's bed! What a good thing it is that from the distance of half a century the insignificant dissolves into bluish haze, and Tolstoi rises before us, a snow-capped peak in a company of lofty peaks—that gallery of the immortals which is destined, whatever our forward progress, to gleam eternally at the horizon of human culture. And so, Tolstoi's departure assumes the aspect of a belated liberation, the rending of worn-out trammels and the fulfilment of his old desire to lose himself in his simple-hearted Russia, hiding away in one grassblade among the many his all-too-vast personality, that he himself could not keep in subjection.

All this must not be taken as implying that the heavens were empty for Tolstoi, or that they reflected nought but the peasants, with their wooden ploughs, and the vale of life. Not at all. Indeed, if we take Gorky's reminiscences, they begin with the observation that "a thought which gnaws noticeably, more often than others, at Tolstoi's heart is the thought of God." This observation Gorky follows up with the important—though highly subjective—amendment: "It makes the impression, at times, not so much of a thought as of strained resistance to something that he senses above him." And no less intense than this biblical theomachy was Tolstoi's impassioned zeal. It would have fully sufficed for the founding of a new religion, which Tolstoi had once contemplated in the pages of his diary. It may even be said that Tolstoi's accusatory activities, which nothing could subdue in the course of over five decades, made him akin to the prophets of old, who, armed but with the spade of faith and will, undertook to turn up the virgin soil of human souls—to change the geography of the continents. Those, I will be told, were simpler times. Well, then, let us recall Tolstoi's reflections—and they were abundant—on wars, on idleness, on wealth, even on surplus value: reflections so entirely of our present day that the ink with which they were written seems still undried. Or take such a thing as his introductory remarks to an article written in 1896, which, as Tolstoi himself put it, promulgated the unconditional destruction of the capitalist system and its replacement by the communist system. And on the other hand we might recall how Tolstoi's intellect, ablaze, rejected Dante, Raphael, and Shakespeare! Or how his conscience, roused to such fury as to paralyse his genius, accused him of mercenary extortion of the people's bread by means of the books that he had written. Or his willingness even to halt progress in full career: "Let culture perish, but justice triumph"; and, in the same passage: "The more we give ourselves up to beauty, the further we find ourselves from good"—beauty being represented as a direct accomplice and mask of evil. It is no far cry, from such purification of the world by flame, to Savonarola's blazing pyre! In such resolute spirit, a man may go to all sorts of extremes in his efforts towards correction of our globe.

What, then, did he lack, this Tolstoi who so resolutely raised his arm in menace to the doomed? What did he lack—voice, or fire, or the tatters of the prophets—that he was not able to lead the rebirth of beggared mankind, to pull the weeds that had overgrown the fertile human plain, and, if not to found a new religion, at least to take the place that he deserved in affirmation of the new life which in his time already stood just outside the world's gates, and seven years after his death burst in through those gates, borne on the bayonet tips of Russia's workers and soldiers? Men have always had dreams that were too vast, too profound, for any one man to carry out alone. Why, then, was it not apostles, not ardent disciples, that remained when Tolstoi was gone, but only sectarians, scattered over the face of the earth—much like the Stundists and Molokane of his day? Does not the answer lie in this: that Tolstoi tried to bring about the transformation of life he had conceived by proclamation of an all-forgiving supernal goodness—which, incidentally, the Christian hierarchs had in the course of two thousand years so imprudently adapted to the convenience of the blue-bloods and the rich. And again: the Gospels bid men occupy themselves, first and foremost, with the ordering of their souls, "and all these things shall be added unto you." But the entire genealogy of human suffering goes to show that, aside from celestial light for the soul, there is a fearful lot of other things that people must have for even a barely tolerable existence—not to speak of that lofty standard which Tolstoi designated by the term, kingdom of God.

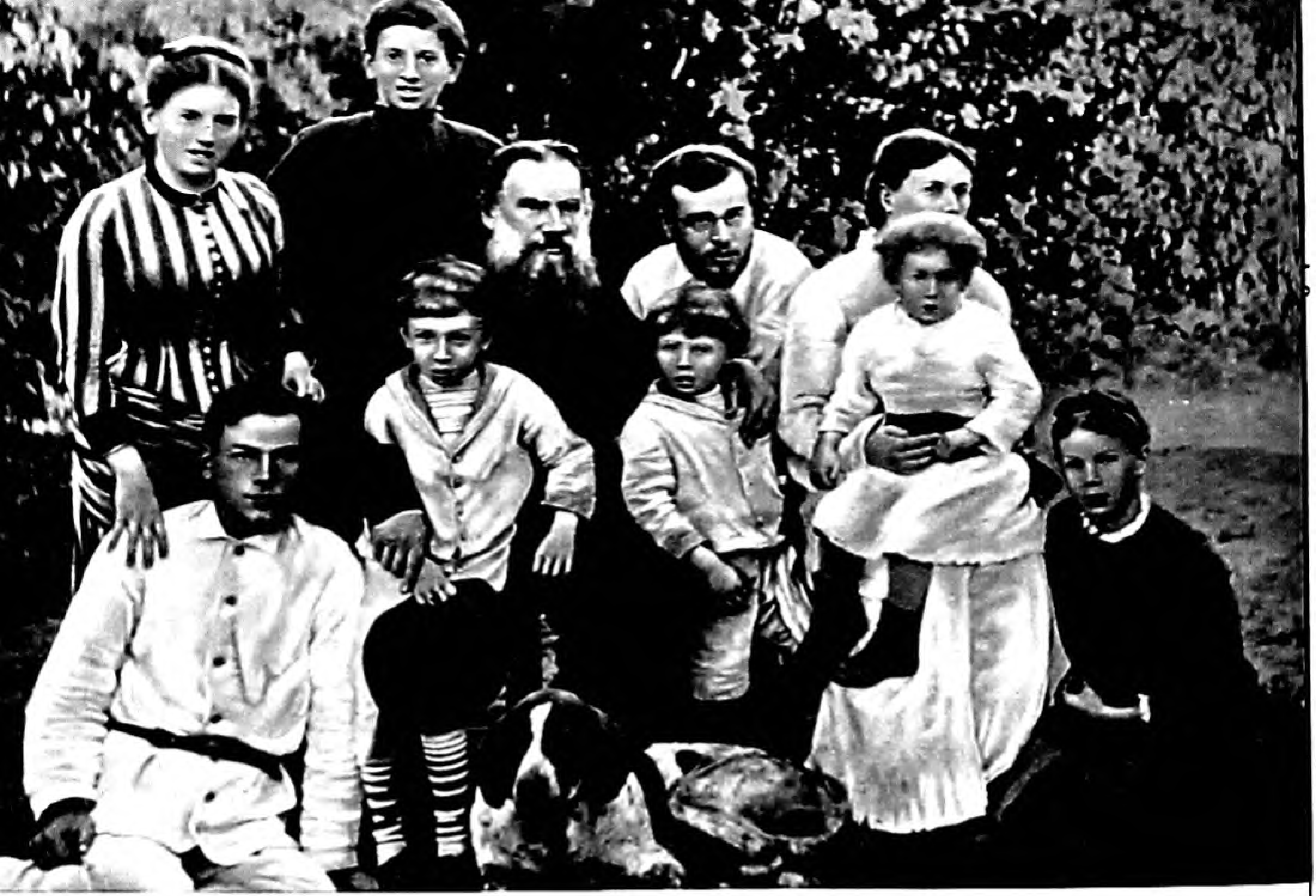
The list of human needs condensed in the Gospel concept, "all these things," is led by our daily bread. How is one to feed one's family, and all the rest of mankind, which will comprise some six thousand million mouths by the end of the century? No one, after the Sermon on the Mount, has succeeded in repeating the Gospel experiment of making five loaves of bread suffice for a disproportionately larger number of mouths. Clearly, the pious Mary cannot possibly get along without the help of the active, earthly Martha! And then, in long sequence, come the other questions, each more formidable than the last: how to provide all with clothing and, in our climate, with warm dwellings; and how, on an oecumenical scale, to organize the commodity circulation of the materials that go into the making of verse and rails, of telescopes and toys; and how to ward off insane bloodbaths and all-destroying thermonuclear storms, that mothers may no longer live in frantic anxiety for their babies' future; and how to awaken the conscience of certain public figures, so hardened in their class cupidity that not even two successive worldwide conflicts at an interval of twenty years have been able to bring them to reason; and how, finally, to halt the "cold war" before it can overflow its crater, into which mankind, with blood-flecked lips, now peers more and more often. Clearly, it will take something rather more effective than a Bible verse to protect us, to save from the inferno the growing generations we have brought into the world and the wealth we have accumulated—all that by right belongs to the new life now already begun.

It is not such incidental questions as, say, family problems or the less urgent problems of art, or even education, that Tolstoi presents for consideration in his popular preceptive stories. It is the primary, immediate purpose of progress: universal human well-being. And that gives us the right to pose a direct question, which will have to remain unanswered. Supposing that Lev Tolstoi, that exacting artist, so thorough in his treatment of every detail, had taken it into his head to transfer the infinitely righteous population of his lesser prose—ancients, youths, pilgrims, pleasant young wives—into the flesh and blood of his own major prose, that is, to shift them from their abstract, menology state of being to the terrain of real life as it was in Russia in that day, at the same time providing them with everything necessary for their complete happiness in life, that is, protecting them reliably against the calamities of war, famine, and unemployment, against class discrimination, economic parasitism, and other evils; would he not then have been compelled to such a step as the affirmation of certain indispensable social premises and measures, capable of convincingly securing his characters' well-being? For it is precisely neglect of such so-called little things that leads to the shocks of those world-wide catastrophes that leave behind them burial mounds and poor, malodorous ruins. And had the great writer undertaken such a brilliant, logically grounded revision, who can tell at what new point he would have come out on the highway of progressive thought of his times. In a word, it was only one stride that Tolstoi needed to take—though, true enough, it would have been a stride across a bottomless abyss!

No, such a stride demanded other means; and it demanded a resolution immeasurably greater than that required simply to rend the cobweb of class distinctions. It is easier to launch wrathful thoughts against vice in the abstract than to undertake, barehanded and in adverse weather, a re-laying of the material foundations of life—the road that was taken by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. To carve out a poetic concept, and to carve out new social forms, chisels of high-quality steel are required—but the steel must be of very different types; and in this I glimpse the distinction between the activities of the great poet and the activities of the great leader of men. Tolstoi was above all else an artist, and Turgenev's dying appeal that he return to the main road shows what the finest people of the times thought of Tolstoi's religious reformism.

Tolstoi's writings present an instructive history of truly gigantic achievements, and of as truly gigantic delusions—delusions which at times diverted him from the emotional traditions of Pushkin to the track of rationalistic preachment, dangerous to the artist if only in its substitution of scholastic speculations for the critical observation of real life. And such preachment occupied half the life of this amazing artist, whose pen could inspire the reader at will with any and every

Lev Tolstoi, 1868



Family group, 1884

emotion in the spectrum of human feelings—an emotion tinged always with the naïve wonder that accompanies any miracle, softly transforming the human soul, making it more staunch, and more responsive, and more irreconcilable towards evil. Is it not for this that we are thankful to Tolstoi: that he gave us the power and the right to despise and reject Karenin; to suffer with Natasha at the bedside of her wounded lover; to weep in proud tribute to the heroism of Tushin's battery; to seethe with indignation at the hypocrisy and the criminal indifference of the class court that judges Katyusha Maslova, innocent victim of this same class; to drink deep, with Levin, of sweet physical weariness in the famed scene of the mowing; to remember with eternal gratitude our staggering experience, visual and moral, in that supremely executed revelatory scene—the meeting of Bolkonsky, prostrate on the field of Austerlitz, with his adored Napoleon, author of this extermination of human life. Each of these scenes throbs with genuine life—and is it not, perhaps, this profound perception of the human soul, arising from respect for the never-to-be-repeated individual personality, that we so miss, at times, in the literature of the present day? Which, then, of the methods Tolstoi tested will help the modern writer to achieve swift and lasting influence over his readers' hearts? With what type of plough, and to what depth, is it best to turn up the caked soil of the spirit, if we do not wish to rob it of its fertility even before it is sown to the seed of the morrow's harvest?

Tolstoi's seat stands empty. There is no one, as yet, in world literature, no one in our present-day Soviet literature, to compare with him. Nor, perhaps, was it really our mission to expound immediately and exhaustively the new life opening up before us amid shocks, and lightning flashes, and the din and uproar of gigantic upheavals. There have been times when the paper smouldered beneath our pens! Did not our duty lie in this: that we keep alight the flame of our national literature through this storm of tremendous transformation; that we record for our descendants how it all came about? Generations of writers still to come will continue the portrayal of the fabulous days and deeds of the past half-century, as a result of which human souls in our country have changed in mien, and the very surface of the land has been transformed.

Splendid artists of the written word will rise to take our places in the ranks; and in the heart of one among them the people's legends of the past will merge with the new Socialist humanism and the material advance of reborn civilization—and that will bring him the power to rise to Tolstoian heights, whence he will have a spreading view of the new map of the world, revised and supplemented; more, he will see how the difficult age that we have come through fits into the vast current of human history.

A clear-cut line in our literature marks off the time when Tolstoi was not yet from the time in which every aspect of our spiritual life bears some imprint of his creative thought. Whatever the wealth of our forebears, who created our history and our language, and laid the foundation of our material being—we are richer than they; for in each of us there is some fragment of Tolstoi. There we have an example of the reciprocal action of Motherland and Genius. By virtue of his great gift, Genius brought world-wide glory to his Motherland, and in doing so himself became that Lev Tolstoi whom the whole world now hails!

Translated from the Russian by H. Altschuler

RELATIVES

S. A. Tolstaya

Sophia Andreyevna Tolstaya, née Bers,
(1844-1919): wife of Lev Tolstoi

DATA FOR A BIOGRAPHY OF LEV TOLSTOI AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE TOLSTOI FAMILY

October 24, 1876

Lev Nikolayevich was not yet eight years old when his father came upon him one day with a reader in his hand. The boy was reading Pushkin's poem "On the Death of Napoleon" with great feeling and expressiveness. His father was evidently impressed by the truthfulness of his rendition, for he said: "How well Lev reads! Come, read it to us again." He called Lev Nikolayevich's godfather, Semyon Ivanovich Yazykov, from the next room, and made his son read Pushkin's verses to him.

Judging by what I have been able to gather about my husband's childhood from his aunts, and also from my grandfather Islenyev (who was a great friend of Tolstoi's father), Lev was a very strange and unusual child. For example, he would enter a drawing-room and bow with his back to those present, holding his head high and snapping his heels together. Once, when he was locked up in his room on the first floor for misbehaving, he jumped out of the window, with no ill effects but that he slept all the next day. After that he was as well as ever.

Lev Nikolayevich was twelve years old in the famine year of 1840. All the boys had their own horses at Yasnaya Polyana where the family lived in the summer, and little Lev's horse was a black filly. Due to the famine, the children's horses were not allowed oats; they were merely turned out to graze. The boys, however, would go marauding in the fields and bring back hats full of oats to feed them. So sure were they of their proprietary rights that they gave no thought to the poor peasants to whom the oats belonged.

In the autumn the whole family would set out from Tula for Kazan in an endless train of coaches and carriages. The smaller children rode with Aunt Pelageya Ilyinishna. Sometimes they would stop in a field or wood to pick mushrooms, have a bathe in a river, or take a walk.

The Tolstois lived in Kazan for five years. Every summer the whole family, accompanied by Aunt Pelageya Ilyinishna, went to Yasnaya Polyana. Barges loaded with their belongings and servants sailed slowly down the Volga while the family travelled by coach. Every autumn they returned to Kazan, where all four brothers attended the university. Without consulting a soul, Lev Nikolayevich suddenly announced his intention of studying in the Department of Oriental Languages, and, deaf to the advice of others, carried out his intention. But he could stand no more than a year of it; he then changed over to the Law Department. He was a poor student and always had difficulty in learning what others said he must. Whatever he learned in life he learned of his own accord, and did it spontaneously, quickly, with intense application.

Lev Nikolayevich's student life held little of interest. In answer to my question as to whether he had made any attempts to write then, he told me he had written an article in the form of a philosophical discourse on the subject of symmetry, a matter to which he had given much thought at the time. The article was lying on his desk when Shuvalov, a friend of his brothers, burst into the room, his pockets bulging with bottles in anticipation of a drinking bout. Seeing the article, he picked it up and read it. He asked Lev Nikolayevich what he had copied it out of, and when the latter replied diffidently that he had written it himself, Shuvalov laughed and told him he was fibbing, that a youngster of his age could not have written anything so clever and profound. And he left the room still believing that Tolstoi was not the author.

Lev Nikolayevich spent less than two years in the Law Department. His brothers soon finished the university and left Kazan. The time had come for the boys to separate. Left alone at the university, Lev Nikolayevich began to prepare conscientiously for his 2nd-year examinations, then went off at a philosophical tangent and decided there was no point in continuing his formal studies. The following circumstances explain his sudden interest in philosophy.

A young professor at the University of Kazan, named Meyer, had taken particular notice of Lev Nikolayevich. Through a student named Pekarsky he conveyed a message to the others, and especially to Lev Nikolayevich, that he would like someone to undertake a comparison of Catherine II's Edict and Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois*. Lev Nikolayevich threw himself enthusiastically into the task and began to study Montesquieu, then legal philosophy, then philosophy in general, and so abandoned his studies and devoted himself undividedly and with his usual enthusiasm to philosophy. On his arrival at Yasnaya Polyana he decided to imitate Diogenes, made himself a long robe of crude material which he never changed, led an ascetic life and read the philosophers.

It first occurred to him to try to describe something in words when he was living in Moscow. He had just finished Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, and sat, excited and moved, at the window gazing out into the street. "There goes a policeman—who is he, how does he live? And now a carriage is passing by—who is in it, where are they going, what are they thinking of? And who lives in that house, what is their life like? How interesting it would be to describe it all, what an interesting book could be written about it!"

He often told me his best memories were of the Caucasus. He read a great deal, translated Sterne, played chess with his brother and the other officers, and led the cleanest, quietest, and most proper of lives. Hunting and nature afforded him endless pleasure. But the main thing was that he made his first attempts at writing in the Caucasus. It was in Tiflis that he wrote *Childhood* and *Boyhood*.

He told me that one day in the Caucasus, on receiving his copy of the journal *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*, he found in it an article of literary criticism containing a few words in praise of the unknown author of *Childhood*. He said: "I was lying on a plank bed in the hut with my brother and Ogolin near by; I read and drank in the praise, my breast almost bursting with pride, and said to myself: 'Nobody, not even they, knows that the praise is of me.' "

A. A. Tolstaya

Alexandra Andreyevna Tolstaya (1817-1904):
Lev Tolstoi's aunt

REMINISCENCES

I have a vivid recollection of how he (Tolstoi) looked in 1855 when he returned from Sebastopol as a young artillery officer. I remember what a charming impression he made on us all.

He was modest and unaffected in manner, and so vivacious that he threw everyone else into lively spirits. He rarely talked about himself, would scan every new face closely, and describe his impressions of a new acquaintance with humour and, usually, exaggeration. The nickname "thin-skinned" that his wife subsequently gave him fitted him perfectly, so violent was his reaction, favourable or unfavourable, to every impression. He saw through people with his artistic sixth sense, and his judgement was often amazingly true. The expressiveness of his plain face, with its clever, kind and eloquent eyes, compensated for whatever he lacked in the way of good looks, and that, I would say, is better than beauty.

We all loved him dearly and were delighted to see him whenever he put in an appearance. But the friendship that bound the two of us for the rest of our lives began rather late; in fact it did not ripen until 1857, when we were in Switzerland together.

We had been living in Geneva all that winter, and in March, to our great surprise, Lev Tolstoi arrived (I might add in passing that his appearances and disappearances were always in the nature of a *coup de théâtre*).

As we had not been corresponding with him, we had no idea at all of his whereabouts and imagined him to be in Russia.

"I have come here straight from Paris," he announced. "Paris was so hateful that I almost went mad. What didn't I see there! First there were the thirty-six *ménages* (married couples) living in the *maison garnie* where I stayed. Nineteen of them were illicit alliances. That infuriated me. Then I decided to test myself, and went to watch a criminal guillotined. After that I couldn't sleep and didn't know what to do with myself. Fortunately, I learned quite by chance that you were in Geneva and rushed off on the spur of the moment, certain that you would save me."

And true enough, as soon as he had unburdened himself he regained his peace of mind and we got on beautifully, seeing each other daily, going for walks in the mountains and enjoying life in every way. The weather was exquisite, the landscape—need I say? We gloried in it with the delight of dwellers of the plains, though Lev did sometimes try to curb our enthusiasm by assuring us that this was as nothing compared to the Caucasus. Still, it was quite enough for us.

He was for ever trying to begin life over again, discarding the past like a worn-out garment. How naively we both believed then in the possibility of turning oneself into another person in one day, of completely transforming oneself just by wishing it. Although at our age we should have known better, we gave ourselves up completely to this self-deception, so much younger were we in spirit than in years.

After several days of wandering in the mountains and valleys we went to Lucerne, and there Lev made another of his unexpected and unpredictable appearances. He seemed to spring out of the earth. He had arrived in Lucerne two days before us, and had had an experience which he described later in the story called "Notes of Prince Nekhlyudov." We found him excited and seething with rage.

This is what, he told us, had occurred on the eve of our arrival. A wandering musician had played for a long time under the Sweizerhof balcony, where an élite company had gathered. All listened to the musician with pleasure, but when he held out his hat to receive his reward, nobody threw him a copper. This was horrid of course, but Lev made an enormity of it.

To punish the haughty gathering, he took the musician's arm, sat down with him at one of the tables and ordered supper and champagne. It is hardly likely that the people he wished to take revenge on appreciated his motive, or that the poor musician did either.

He had another quality I should like to mention.

He had a horror of being untruthful either in word or deed, but sometimes it led him to create just the opposite impression.

Once, on the morning of a day when he was invited to attend a *soirée* at my sister's, where many guests were expected, he wrote me saying he could not come as he had just learned of his brother's death (he loved his brothers dearly). I replied, of course, that I quite understood. And what do you suppose? He turned up suddenly at the *soirée* as though nothing had happened.

His coming shocked and distressed me.

"Why have you come, Lev?" I asked him in French.

"Why? Because what I wrote you this morning was untrue. If I have come, it means that I could come."

As if that were not enough, several days later he confessed to me that he had even gone to the theatre.

"You must have found it very amusing," I observed in even greater distress.

"No, I can't say I did. I went through hell when I got back from the theatre. If I had had a revolver I would certainly have shot myself."

"By going so far out of your way to be truthful, you mock the truth," I would say to him on such occasions, and he would agree. Yet he could not refrain from experimenting on himself.

"I must put myself to the stiffest tests," he would say.

Several times that winter he brought us stories in manuscript to read. "A Happy Married Life" and "Three Deaths" had their first readings at our house. He read poorly and self-consciously and accepted all criticism good-naturedly.

Projects sprang up in his head like mushrooms after rain. On every visit he came with a new plan for the future and was voluble in his delight at having at last hit upon some worthy occupation.

One time it was beekeeping, another—the afforestation of the whole of Russia, and so on. His school held his interest longer than anything else.

After his marriage in 1862 he hardly left the country and we saw much less of each other, although we made the most of every opportunity. Once he . . . visited me at Ilyinskoye. That was in 1866.

That was the day, I remember, when he told me about his quarrel with Turgenev, which almost ended in a duel. The details of the quarrel escape me (the cause was very trivial) but I have not forgotten Lev Nikolayevich's comment.

"I assure you," he said, blushing to the roots of his hair, "that my role in that stupid affair was not unworthy. I was not to blame in any way, and although I felt myself innocent, I wrote Turgenev the most friendly, conciliatory letter. But he answered it so rudely I had to break with him."

Subsequently everything was set right and they saw more of each other. But they could never be real friends. They were basically too different.

S. A. Tolstaya

THE MARRIAGE OF LEV TOLSTOI

Early in August, 1862, we three sisters were overjoyed by the news that mother was going to take our little brother Volodya and us to see her father and our grandfather, Alexander Mikhailovich Islenyev, and that we were making the journey in one of the Annenkov coaches plying the roads at that time.

My grandfather, the "papa" of Lev Nikolayevich's *Childhood*, was living on his estate of Ivitsy, Odoyevsky Uyezd, some fifty versts from Yasnaya Polyana. Lev Nikolayevich's sister, Maria Nikolayevna, was just back from Algiers and staying at Yasnaya Polyana, and as she and my mother had been close friends in childhood and mother had not been to Yasnaya Polyana since she was a girl, she decided to make a stop there.

Maria Nikolayevna and Lev Nikolayevich met us with loud protestations of joy.

We were given a large room downstairs, which had an arched ceiling and was not only simply, but even poorly furnished. The sofas standing about this room were painted white and had very hard cushions for backs and seats, all upholstered in blue-and-white striped ticking. There was a deep armchair with the same kind of cushions, and it, too, was painted white. The simple birchwood table had been made by the house carpenter. There were iron rings in the ceiling from which saddles, hams and the like had been hung when Lev Nikolayevich's grandfather, Prince Volkhonsky, had used the room as a store-room.

The days were getting shorter (it was the beginning of August) and we hardly had time for a look at the gardens.

When dusk began to fall mother sent me downstairs to unpack our things and make up our beds. Dunyasha, the maid, and I busied ourselves preparing for the night. Suddenly Lev Nikolayevich came in and Dunyasha turned to him to say there were places for three on the sofas, but no place for a fourth.

"The armchair can be made to serve," said Lev Nikolayevich, pulling up a long armchair and pushing a wide square stool against it.

"I'll sleep in the armchair," said I.

"I'll make your bed for you," said Lev Nikolayevich, and began unfolding a sheet with clumsy, unpractised fingers. Despite my shyness, I felt something pleasantly intimate about this joint preparation for the night.

When everything was ready and we went upstairs, we found my sister Tanya curled up on a sofa in Lev Nikolayevich's aunt's room, sound asleep. My sister Liza looked at us inquiringly. I vividly remember every minute of that evening. . . . The door in the middle of the wall stood ajar and I got a glimpse of a little parlour with an old rosewood clavichord in it and with doors opening out on to a small balcony from which there was a beautiful view.

I entered the parlour, took a chair and went out on the balcony to sit alone and admire the view.

Everybody had gathered for supper. Lev Nikolayevich came to fetch me. I thanked him and said I did not care to eat.

"It's so lovely here," I said.

Lev Nikolayevich went back to the dining-room, but rejoined me on the balcony without finishing his meal. I cannot remember what we talked about but I remember his saying: "How frank and unaffected you are!" and my pleasure at his words.

I slept well in the deep armchair Lev Nikolayevich had arranged for me. At first, to be sure, I twisted about, cramped by the arms on either side, but in my heart I was elated and laughed to myself whenever I recalled how Lev Nikolayevich had made my bed. At last I fell asleep filled with a new sense of joy.

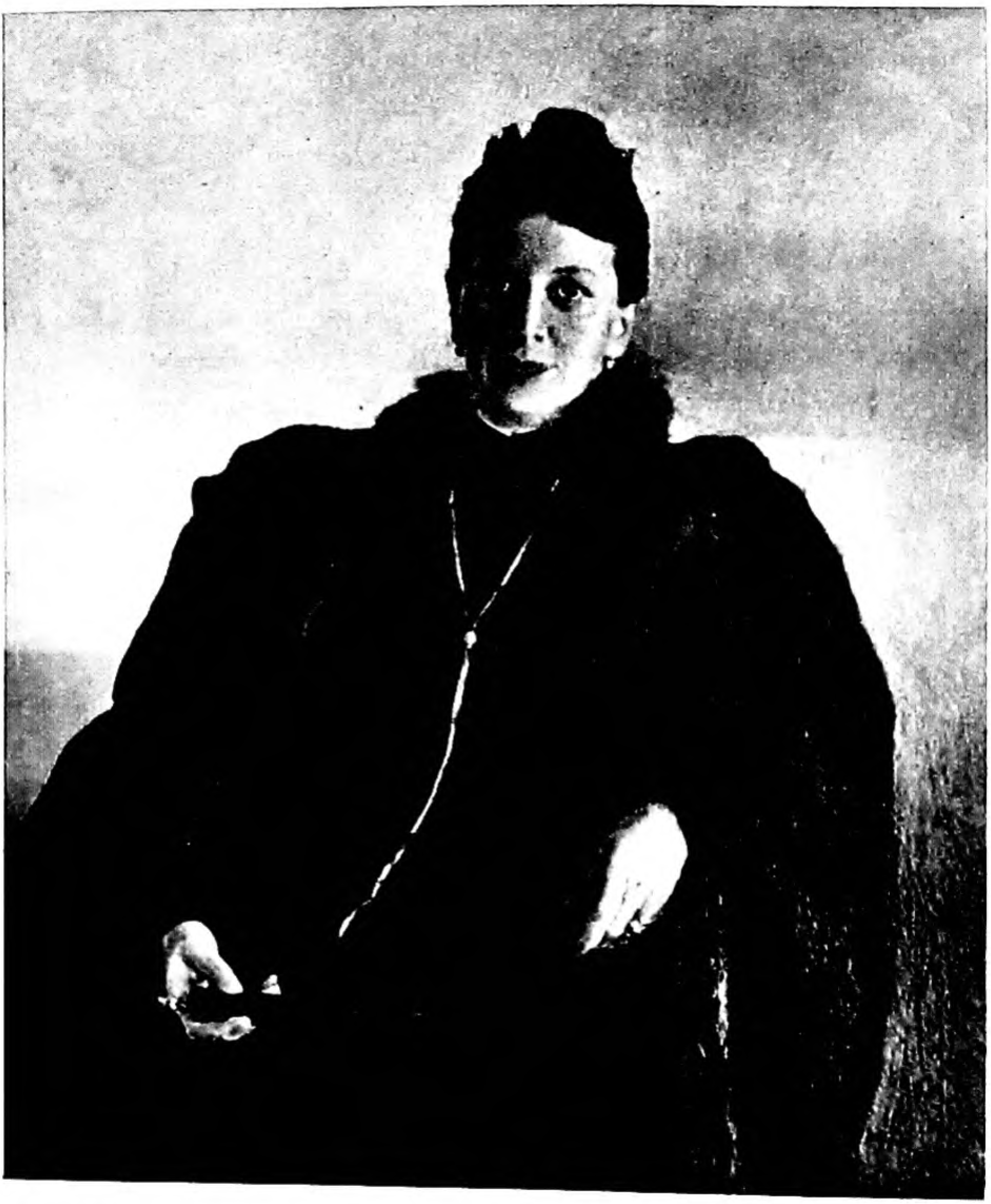
I awoke the next morning in the same joyous mood. I wanted to be everywhere and see everything and talk to everybody. How cheerful the atmosphere at Yasnaya Polyana was in those days! Lev Nikolayevich did his best to amuse us; Maria Nikolayevna looked on approvingly. We harnessed the so-called "tub"—a long carriage. Baraban was the shaft-horse and Strelka the trace-horse. When we had put an old side-saddle on Byelogubka, a bay riding-horse, and Lev Nikolayevich had saddled his handsome white horse, we set out on a picnic.

Lev Nikolayevich offered me Byelogubka, the very horse I had longed to ride.

"But I have no riding-habit here," I said, looking down at my yellow dress with its black velvet buttons and belt of the same material.

"That doesn't matter," said Lev Nikolayevich with a smile. "This is not a fashionable place. Only the trees will see you," and with that he helped me into the saddle.

I considered myself the happiest person on earth, riding beside Lev Nikolayevich on the road to Zaseka, where now there is a railway station, but then there was nothing but thick forest. We rode into a sort of clearing where we saw a stack of hay, and Maria Nikolayevna suggested that we should climb to the top and slide



Portrait of S. A. Tolstaya, the writer's wife, by V. A. Serov, 1892

Lev Tolstoi at Yasnaya Polyana, 1904

down the sides, which we did gleefully. The evening passed in riotous fun.

The following morning we took our leave.

The day after our arrival at Ivitsy, Lev Nikolayevich turned up unexpectedly on his white horse. He had ridden fifty versts, yet he arrived full of life and joy and energy. My grandfather, who, through his friendship with Count Nikolai Ilyich Tolstoi, had come to love all the Tolstois, welcomed Lev Nikolayevich with particular affection.

For some reason we had a great many guests that day. The young people, after their afternoon ride, got up a dance in the evening. There were officers and the young sons of near-by landlords and many young ladies and their mothers. They were all strangers and not our kind. But what did we care? It was merry and that was all that mattered. Different people took turns at the piano while we danced.

"How dressed up everybody is!" remarked Lev Nikolayevich, looking at my diaphanous lavender-and-white dress of thin barege with lavender bows on the shoulders from which hung long streamers known as "*Suivez moi.*" "I wish auntie could see how pretty you look," he added with a smile.

"Aren't you dancing?" I asked.

"No, that's not for me. I'm too old."

The old men and the ladies played cards at two tables. When the evening was over, the card tables empty, the candles burning out, and the guests gone their separate ways, we still did not go to bed. Lev Nikolayevich held us with his lively talk. But mama, considering it high time we rested, ordered us to bed. We dared not disobey. I was already at the door when Lev Nikolayevich called to me:

"Sophia Andreyevna, wait a moment!"

"Yes?"

"See if you can read what I am going to write."

I consented.

"I shall write only the first letters and you must guess the words."

"What? But that's impossible! However, I'll try."

Lev Nikolayevich wiped off the card scores with a brush, took a piece of chalk and began to write. We were both very serious and very excited. As I watched his big red hand I was aware that all my mental faculties were concentrated on the chalk and the hand that held it. Neither of us spoke.

"Y.y. and l.f.h.m.m.c.o.m.a. and i.t.b.h.," he wrote.

"Your youth and longing for happiness make me conscious of my age and inability to be happy," I read.

My heart beat violently, my head throbbed, my face burned—I lost all sense of time and reality; at that moment I felt that nothing was beyond my ken, nothing too hard for me to do, nothing too vast for me to embrace.

"Now read the rest," said Lev Nikolayevich and began to write again:

"Y.f.i.m.a.m. and y.s.L. Y. and T.m.d.m."

"Your family is mistaken about me and your sister Liza. You and Tanya must defend me," I read quickly and without the slightest hesitation.

Lev Nikolayevich showed no surprise. One might have thought it was a most ordinary achievement.

We heard my mother's angry voice summoning me to bed. We said a hurried good night, snuffed out the candles and parted. Upstairs I lighted a little candle end, sat on the floor behind a bookcase, put my diary on a wooden chair and began writing in it. I immediately put down the words Lev Nikolayevich had indicated by their first letters, and it came to me vaguely then and there that something serious and important had begun between us that would have no end. But for various reasons I did not let my feelings or dreams run away with me. I locked up everything that had happened that evening behind a barred door, hiding what had no right to be seen until the time came.

We made another stop at Yasnaya Polyana for one day on the way back from Ivitsy.

We sent to Tula for a large Annenkov coach (so named after the proprietor). It seated four on the inside and two in the back, like a covered droshky. We older girls were sorry to leave Yasnaya Polyana. We took our leave of auntie and Natalia Petrovna, then looked for Lev Nikolayevich.

"I'm going with you," he announced gaily. "Surely you don't think I can remain in Yasnaya Polyana now? The place will be too dull."

Without asking myself why I felt so happy and hopeful, I rushed off to tell my mother and sisters the good news. The decision was that Lev Nikolayevich should ride outside in the back all the time, while my sister Liza and I were to take turns sitting beside him until we reached Moscow.

Presently we were on our way. On and on we rode. I remember how sleepy I grew towards evening. It was cold and I wrapped the robes more tightly about me and felt quietly happy to be near this man, an old friend of our family, the beloved author of *Childhood*, now nearer and dearer to me than he had ever been before. He plunged into a long and fascinating account of the Caucasus and his life there, describing the beauty of the mountains, the wild landscape and his own exploits. I was thrilled by the sound of his voice—even, throaty, touched with emotion, and seeming to come from far away. Sometimes I dropped off to sleep for a few moments, then roused again to hear the same voice going on with its poetic tale of the Caucasus. I was ashamed to be unable to fight off my drowsiness, but I

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was so young! Much as I hated to miss bits of Lev Nikolayevich's account, I could not keep my eyes open. We rode all night. Inside the coach everybody slept. Only at rare intervals did I hear my mother and Maria Nikolayevna exchange a few words, or little Volodya mutter in his sleep.

We were approaching Moscow. During the last lap I was to take my seat outside, up in the back with Lev Nikolayevich. But when we were about to set out after our stop, my sister Liza came to me and asked me to change places with her.

"If it's all the same to you, Sonya, let me have your turn," she said. "It's so stuffy inside the coach."

We left the station and began to take our seats. I climbed into the coach.

"Sophia Andreyevna!" Lev Nikolayevich called to me. "It's your turn to ride in the back."

"I know, but I'm cold," I said evasively and slammed the coach door to.

Lev Nikolayevich stood a moment as if in thought, then took his seat.

The following day . . . we were back in our Pokrovskoye country-house, where my father and brothers were waiting for us.

Having made the journey from Yasnaya Polyana to Moscow with us, Lev Nikolayevich took quarters with a German shoemaker. He was occupied at the time with his school and the journal *Yasnaya Polyana.*

He came out to Pokrovskoye almost daily, sometimes driving back with my father, whose duties often took him to town.

He and I had many walks and talks. Once he asked me whether I was keeping a diary. I told him I had been doing so for a long time, ever since I was eleven, and that I had also written a long story the summer before, when I turned sixteen.

"Let me see your diary," said Lev Nikolayevich.

"Oh, no, I couldn't."

"Then give me your story to read."

I gave it to him. The following morning I inquired whether he had read it. He told me nonchalantly that he had looked it through. But later I read this entry in his diary: "She gave me her story to read. Very simple and truthful." And afterwards he told me he had not slept all night, having been greatly upset by my description of one of the characters, Prince Dublitsky, whom he identified with himself and of whom I had said: "The prince was very ugly in appearance and inconstant in his views."

At first I did not suppose I was the cause of his frequent visits. But I soon realized that my own feeling for him was more than a passing one. . . .

Between the 5th and 16th of September our family moved back to Moscow.

In Moscow Lev Nikolayevich renewed his almost daily visits. One evening I slipped quietly into my mother's bedroom. She was already in bed.

"What is it, Sonya?" she asked.

"Mother, nobody thinks it is me Lev Nikolayevich is going to marry, but I think he loves me," I began timidly.

That made her very angry for some reason, and she turned on me.

"For ever thinking that everybody is in love with you!" she scolded. "Get along with you and stop imagining such nonsense."

Offended by mother's response to my frankness, I never spoke to anybody about Lev Nikolayevich again. My father was angry, too, that Lev Nikolayevich, though such a frequent guest at our house, had failed to ask for the hand of the eldest daughter, as Russian custom required. He was cool to Lev Nikolayevich and short with me. The atmosphere at home was tense and oppressive, especially for me.

On September 14 Lev Nikolayevich said he had something of great importance to tell me, but he did not say what. I thought I could guess. He spoke to me a great deal that evening, standing with his back against the stove while I played the piano. Whenever I stopped playing he would murmur: "Go on, go on. . . ." The music kept others from hearing what he was saying; my hands trembled with excitement and my fingers fumbled as I played the same tune from the waltz *Il Baccio* over and over again.

But Lev Nikolayevich did not propose to me. I do not remember his exact words but I remember their meaning: that he loved me and wanted to marry me. It was all rather vague, however. . . .

Another day, September 15th, went by. On the evening of September 16th (a Saturday) my brother Sasha came home with his fellow-cadets. Tea was served in the dining-room and the hungry cadets were fed. Lev Nikolayevich had spent all of that day at our house, and, choosing a moment when we could be alone, he called me to my mother's room, which was empty just then.

"I wanted to tell you this—but could not," he said. "Take this letter. I have been carrying it in my pocket for several days. Read it. I will be waiting for your answer here."

I seized the letter and rushed headlong down the stairs to the room I shared with my sisters.

I scarcely read the letter, simply ran my eyes over it till I came to the words: "Will you be my wife?" I would have rushed upstairs and said "Yes" to Lev Nikolayevich had I not run into my sister Liza at the door. "What's the matter with you?" asked Liza. "*Le comte m'a fait la proposition,*" I told her quickly. My mother appeared and instantly grasped the situation. Taking me firmly by the shoulders and turning me round, she said:

"Go to him and give him your answer."

I flew up the stairs at a terrific speed, past the dining-room, the drawing-room, and into my mother's room. Lev Nikolayevich was leaning against the wall in a corner, waiting for me. I went to him, and he took both my hands in his.

"Well, what is your answer?" he asked.

"Yes, of course," I told him.

In a few minutes the whole house had heard the news and everybody congratulated us.

The next day, September 17, was the name-day of my mother, Lyubov Alexandrovna, and myself. All our Moscow relatives, friends and acquaintances came to congratulate us, and my engagement was announced.

I was engaged for only one week: from September 16 to 23. I was taken from one shop to another, where I listlessly tried on dresses, lingerie and hats. Lev Nikolayevich called every day and once he brought me his diaries. I remember what a severe shock it was to me to read those diaries, which, in his excessive honesty, he felt I must read before our wedding. That had better been left undone, for I wept bitterly on glancing into his past.

One evening my mother and sisters went to the theatre to see *Othello*, in which the famous tragedian Aldridge was playing. Mother sent the carriage back for Lev Nikolayevich and me. I remember my feelings as I sat there, a little afraid of Lev Nikolayevich, afraid that he would soon be disappointed in me, a stupid, insignificant girl. Hardly a word passed between us on the way.

That week was like a nightmare. Lev Nikolayevich was in a great hurry to get married. Mother said that if we could not wait until a complete trousseau was ready, at least I had to be fitted out with the most essential things.

"But she has plenty of clothes," Lev Nikolayevich protested. "She is always well dressed."

A few things were made for me in a great hurry, chiefly my bridal dress, and the wedding was set for seven o'clock in the evening of September 23 at the palace church. While these hurried preparations were proceeding at our house, Lev Nikolayevich also kept very busy. He bought a fine new carriage, ordered photographs of my family, and presented me with a diamond brooch. He also had his photograph taken, which I wished to have mounted in the gold bracelet my father had just given me. . . . I was wholly taken up with my love for Lev Nikolayevich and my fear of disappointing him.

When we discussed our future he offered me the choice of remaining in Moscow to live near my family, of travelling abroad, or of going directly to Yasnaya Polyana. I decided on the last, so as to begin home life at once. Lev Nikolayevich seemed very pleased with my decision.

September 23, our wedding-day, arrived. I did not see Lev Nikolayevich all that day. He rushed in for only a minute, and we sat down on our packed travelling-bags and he began torturing me with questions and doubts about my love for him. I suspected that he wanted to run away, that he was afraid to get married. I began to cry. My mother came in and gave Lev Nikolayevich a piece of her mind. "This is a fine time to upset her," she scolded. "Not only is it her wedding-day, but she is about to set out on a long journey besides. And here she is all in tears." That seemed to put Lev Nikolayevich to shame, for he presently withdrew.

Our marriage ceremony was beautifully described by Lev Nikolayevich in his novel *Anna Karenina,* in the passages devoted to the wedding of Levin and Kitty. Not only the pictorial aspect of the ceremony, but the entire psychological process that took place in Levin's mind are vividly described there. As for me, I had lived through so much all those days that I could no longer feel anything as I stood at the altar.

The ceremony and congratulations over, we found ourselves, just Lev Nikolayevich and I, in the carriage riding home. He was affectionate and to all appearances happy. At our house in the Kremlin* the table was loaded with everything that is usually provided on such occasions: champagne, fruit, sweets, etc. There were not many guests—only our relatives and most intimate friends.

I was helped into my travelling-suit.

A post-boy brought six post-horses which were harnessed to the carriage Lev Nikolayevich had just bought, and our shiny black bags were secured on the roof. Lev Nikolayevich was eager to be off.

The leave-taking began.

A cold autumn rain poured down ceaselessly; the puddles reflected the dull street lamps and the lanterns of our carriage. The horses stamped their hoofs impatiently and those in front with the post-boy pulled at their traces. Lev Nikolayevich slammed the carriage door to, the horses swished through the puddles and we were off. Crouching in my corner, overcome with fatigue and the grief of parting, I wept without cease. Lev Nikolayevich was very much surprised, even annoyed. He had never known what it was to have a real family for he had grown up without mother and father. Neither could he, a man, understand what I felt. He hinted that my love for him could not be very strong if I took the separation from my family so hard. He did not understand that if I loved my family so dearly, I would carry over the same capacity for love to him and our children. And so it proved later.

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* At that time the Bers family lived in the Kremlin, where Sophia Andreyevna's father, a Kremlin physician, had a flat.

When Moscow was left behind and we came out into the country, it was very dark and frightening. I had never travelled in the autumn or winter before. The absence of lights depressed me. We hardly said a word to each other up to the first station, which was Biryulevo, I think. I remember Lev Nikolayevich treating me with an unusual degree of protective love. At Biryulevo we were shown the honour due a newly-wed titled couple travelling in a fine carriage drawn by six horses. The tsar's rooms were thrown open to us. They were large, bare and uncomfortable, with their red velvet furniture. A samovar was brought in and tea served. I sat silently huddled in a corner of the sofa like one condemned.

"You must pour out the tea," said Lev Nikolayevich.

I obeyed and we drank our tea, but I was embarrassed and still afraid. I could not make myself call him by the familiar "thou," and avoided addressing him at all. In fact I continued to use the formal "you" for a long time.

The trip from Moscow to Yasnaya Polyana took a little less than a day and a night. By evening of the next day we were home, and I was glad of it.

On that day began my life at Yasnaya Polyana, a place I hardly left for the next eighteen years.

S. A. Tolstaya

DIARY

January 14, 1863

Lev's spiritual activities seem to be undergoing a lull at present, although I know his soul never sleeps but is always busy with moral problems.

January 17, 1863

I have just been in a temper; I was angry with him for loving everything and everybody, whereas I want him to love only me. Now I am alone and can see that I am being wilful again; it is his kindness and wealth of feeling that make him so exceptional. But he is horrid when he gets angry. He pesters and torments me to such an extent that my only escape is to give in. But his anger passes quickly and he hardly ever nags.

February 25, 1865

Yesterday Lev told me he felt young, and I understood him perfectly.... He said that to feel young meant to feel that everything was in one's power. Dunyasha says he has aged. Can it be true? He is never gay any more, I often annoy him, his writing occupies him but gives him no pleasure.

March 6, 1865

Lev is young, cheerful, independent and working with a will. I feel that he is life and strength and that

I am a mere worm, crawling over him and gnawing at him.

March 15, 1865

I love him fearfully. One cannot be bad, living with him. His knowledge of himself and honesty in all matters lower me in my own eyes and make me want to dig down into myself and ferret out my minutest faults.

March 26, 1865

Lev has the poet's desire to live and to enjoy life all by himself; I think that is because the poetry within him is so fine and so abundant and so precious to him.

March 12, 1866

We spent six weeks in Moscow. Returned on the 7th. Lev attended classes in sculpture and gymnastics. We had an interesting time. Lev modelled his roan horse.

July 19, 1866

We have a new steward, who is here with his wife. She is young, good-looking, and a nihilist. She and Lev have long spirited conversations about literature and philosophy—very long and out of place, I should say; certainly they are boring to me and flattering to her.

August 10, 1866

Yesterday Bibikov told us a terrible story. A soldier-scribe was shot here in Yasenki for striking his company commander in the face. Lev defended him at the court martial but unfortunately the defence was, as usual, no more than a formality.

January 12, 1867

Lev has been writing all winter, in a continual state of excitement and irritation, sometimes in tears.

March 15, 1867

Yesterday at ten o'clock in the evening our hothouses caught fire and burned to the ground. I was asleep. Lev woke me up and I saw the flames through the window. Lev rescued the gardener's children and their things. . . . All the plants (they had been put in by his grandfather and had given pleasure to three generations) were destroyed; the few that were not consumed were either frozen or charred. . . . I feel dreadfully sorry for Lev, he looks so unhappy. . . . He was very fond of his plants and flowers and gave a great deal of time to them. He was delighted when the new plants he put in thrived.

October 6, 1878

In the morning I found Lev downstairs at his desk writing. He said he was rewriting the beginning of a new book for the tenth time. It begins with an examination of the legal aspects of a suit the muzhiks have brought against their landlord. Lev took the case straight from the records, and even gives the dates. From this trial the story flows forth like a fountain, embracing the life of the peasants and their master, people of St. Petersburg and other places.

October 23, 1878

In the evening Lev played the sonatas of Weber and Schubert, some with the violin. . . . Today he told me that he had read so much historical material he was tired of it, and was now resting by reading Dickens' *Martin Chuzzlewit.* I know that when Lev turns to the English novelists he is about to begin writing.

October 24, 1878

He cannot write yet. Today he said: "Sonya, if I do write, it must be so lucid that little children can read every word of it."

November 1, 1878

Yesterday morning Lev read me the beginning of his new book. His conception is very broad, deep and interesting. It begins with a lawsuit peasants have brought against their landlord over a piece of land, then goes on to describe the arrival of Prince Chernyshev and his family in Moscow, the laying of the foundations of the Temple of the Saviour, the religious devotions of an old woman, etc. Lev sat at the piano improvising a long time this evening. He is very gifted in this line too.

November 4, 1878

Lev is hardly writing at all and is dejected. . . . I have been teaching the children, and Lev and I have had an argument about French for Sergei. I believe he should be taught French literature, Lev does not.

November 11, 1878

Lev . . . complains that he cannot write; in the evening, as he was reading Dickens' *Dombey and Son*, he suddenly turned to me and said: "Ah, what an idea has just come to me!" I asked him what it was, but he would not say. Then he explained: "I am thinking about the old woman, how she must look, her figure, her thoughts, and mainly—her *feelings*. That is the main thing—to make her feel, for instance, that her old man Gerasimovich is sitting in jail with half his head shaved, even though he is innocent; that feeling must not leave her for a moment."

November 6, 1878

Today Lev told me that everything is coming clear to him, his characters are taking on life. He worked today and is in good spirits; he *believes* in what he is doing now. But he complains of headaches, and he coughs.

March 24, 1885

Yesterday Lev returned from the Crimea. He went specially to accompany Urusov, who is ill. In the Crimea his thoughts went back to the fighting in Sebastopol; he climbed mountains and admired the sea. On the way to Simeiz, he and Urusov passed the place where Lev was stationed with his cannon during the war. He only fired it once. That was almost thirty years ago. He was riding along with Urusov when suddenly he jumped out of the landau and began looking for something. It turned out he had caught sight of a cannon ball near the road. Could it have been the same one Lev fired during the Sebastopol war? Nobody else had fired a cannon in that spot. There was only one in the field.

June 18, 1887

Lev walked to Yasenki with our two daughters and the two Kuzminsky girls. The other evening he amused himself by playing the piano for hours: Mozart, Weber and Haydn, with the violin. He seemed to enjoy it immensely.

He is happy about his success in America, or rather, about the sympathy with which his work has been received, for success and fame do not interest him much. He looks happy and cheerful nowadays, and often says: "It's wonderful to be alive!"

July 2, 1887

The other evening Sergei was playing a waltz when Lev came in and said to me: "Let's do a turn." We danced, to the delight of the young people. He is very gay and lively, but has grown weaker and tires more quickly at the haymaking or when walking. He has been having long talks with Strakhov about science, art, and music; today they discussed photography.

August 19, 1887

Repin, the artist, has been here. He arrived on the 9th and left on the evening of the 16th. He did two portraits of Lev Nikolayevich. The first was begun downstairs in his study, but Repin was displeased with it and began another, upstairs, in the drawing-room, against a light background. The portrait is exceptionally good. It is still here, drying. He finished the first one quickly and presented it to me.

In the evenings Lev has been reading Gogol's *Dead Souls* to all of us.

December 28, 1890

Yesterday he [Tolstoi] told Lev [Tolstoi's son] what sort of literary form he had been trying his hand at when he wrote "The Kreutzer Sonata." He said that once Andreyev-Burlak, the actor, who is a wonderful raconteur himself, had urged him to write a short story and had told him about meeting an unfortunate gentleman in a railway carriage whose wife had been untrue to him. Lev Nikolayevich decided to use the subject.

January 17, 1891

At dinner we joked about what it would be like if all the gentry changed places with the servants for a week. Lev frowned and went downstairs. I joined him and asked what was the matter. He replied: "Stupid talk about a sacred thing; I suffer enough as it is because we are surrounded by servants, and you make a joke of it. It hurts me, especially in front of the children."

March 6, 1891

After dinner, for the exercise, we joined Lev in his game with the younger children. Every day after dinner Lev carries them around the house; he puts one of them into an empty basket, closes the lid and sets out. In a little while he comes to a halt and asks whoever is in the basket to guess what room he is in.

March 22, 1891

After dinner, Lev and I played a duet on the piano. In the evening, instead of his game of solitaire, he wound unbleached thread into balls for me. The thread was all tangled, and he became deeply engrossed in the occupation.

[About April 20] 1891

Lev was cross about my going to see the tsar. He said we had assumed obligations we could not honour, that formerly he and the tsar had ignored each other, and now my adventure might do us harm and have unpleasant consequences.

May 22, 1891

It was our intention to spend the evening reading, but an interesting discussion began about literature, love, art and painting. Lev said nothing was more disgusting than paintings that depicted lust, for instance a monk eyeing a woman, or a Crimean Tatar abducting a girl on horseback, or a man looking lasciviously at his daughter-in-law. He said such things were bad enough in life, without having them fixed on canvas.

September 19, 1891

A letter from Leskov has come, accompanied by a cutting from the newspaper *Novoye Vremya*. The heading on the cutting is "L. N. Tolstoi on the Famine."

Leskov published an excerpt on the famine taken from a letter written to him by Lev Nikolayevich. The excerpt is very clumsily worded in places and was certainly not intended for publication. Lev was upset about it. He did not sleep all night, and the next morning said the famine was giving him no peace, that public dining-rooms should be opened to feed the starving, that the main thing was to make a personal effort and he hoped I would contribute money. He said he was leaving immediately for Pirogovo to undertake the project and write about it. One could not write and publish articles about something one had not tried in practice, and it was necessary, therefore, to open two or three such dining-rooms with the help of his brother and the landlords of the vicinity, so that he could write about them.

October 8, 1891

Have just looked at the preceding entry in my diary. I wrote that Lev and Tanya had left for Pirogovo and other villages to investigate the famine area. In Pirogovo they were given the cold shoulder by his brother Sergei, so Lev and Tanya went on to the Bibikovs and made a list of the starving there. Tanya stayed on with the Bibikovs, and Lev continued on his journey to a certain rich landed lady, from where he went to the Svechins'. Bibikov and the lady received the idea of the dining-rooms very coldly. Nobody has money to spare, all are concerned with their own affairs. Only the Svechins were sympathetic.

Lev and Tanya returned on the fifth day, and on the 23rd he left again, by rail, for the Epifan Uyezd, this time with Masha. They stayed at Raphail Alexeyevich Pisarev's, from there investigating the stricken villages. Rayevsky joined them there, and they talked over the question of dining-rooms for the hungry. Lev decided at once to move to the Rayevskys' for the winter with our two daughters and open the dining-rooms. He contributed the 100 rubles I had given him before he left home for the purchase of potatoes and beets.

March 2, 1894

Seeing what a bright sunny day it was, Lev Nikolayevich set off with Dunayev for the mushroom market in exceptionally high spirits. He wanted, he said, to watch the peasants sell mushrooms, honey, cranberries and the like.

June 1, 1897

Lev Nikolayevich is writing an article about art, and I rarely see him until dinner-time. At 3 o'clock he invited me to go riding.... Making a threesome with Dunayev, we rode through the beautiful country of the Zaseka. We made a stop at the ore mines operated by a Belgian company, and another at the abandoned "Dead Kingdom," and climbed down into the ravines and up again. Lev Nikolayevich was unusually kind and attentive to me.

June 7, 1897

Lev Nikolayevich ... spent an enjoyable evening looking at the drawings in *Salon*, an art magazine which Tanya receives regularly.

June 17, 1897

Twice today Lev Nikolayevich went to see the dying muzhik Konstantin.

June 19, 1897

We met Lev Nikolayevich as he was seeing off a man who had been put in prison for writing a poem about the Khodynka disaster.* Lev Nikolayevich is continuing feverishly with his article on art and has nearly finished it. He is not doing anything else. This evening he read a French comedy to us from the *Revue Blanche.*

July 15, 1897

It is now two in the morning, and I have been copying all this time. It is a dreadfully tiresome and arduous task, the more so that what I wrote today is sure to be crossed out and completely rewritten by Lev Nikolayevich tomorrow. How patient and industrious he is—it is simply amazing!

August 1, 1897

Lev Nikolayevich played lawn tennis with relish for three hours today, then rode on horseback to Kozlovka. He wanted to go on his bicycle, but it was broken. Yes, and today he wrote a great deal, and seems young, happy and healthy in general. What a giant of a man!

August 5, 1897

Evening. Lev Nikolayevich rode to Myasoyedovo on horseback to give money to the families whose houses were burnt down. At present he is reading his article on art to Kasatkin, Gintsburg, Sobolev, and Goldenweiser.

December 21, 1897, Moscow

This morning Lev Nikolayevich swept the rink clean in our garden and went skating; then he went on horseback to the Vorobyovy Hills and further. He is not in the mood for work for some reason.

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* The Khodynka disaster took place on the 18th of May, 1896. Thousands of people who had flocked to the Khodynskoye Field to receive gifts in celebration of the coronation of Nicholas II were trampled to death when the ill-made floor over the boggy field collapsed.

December 29, 1897

After dinner Lev Nikolayevich and I played Schubert's *Tragic Symphony* arranged for four hands. At first he said the music was stupid and purposeless. Then he played with pleasure, but tired quickly.

January 6, 1898

Lev Nikolayevich is still reading up on Caucasian life and geography—everything, in fact, that has to do with the Caucasus.

January 8, 1898

Yesterday Repin dined with us and kept asking Lev Nikolayevich to suggest a subject for a painting. He said he wanted to use the energy remaining to him before he died to create a lasting work of art, something worth the labour. Lev Nikolayevich has not yet suggested anything but is thinking about it.

January 21, 1898

All day long Sonya Mamonova, Lev Nikolayevich and I have been talking about a rural newspaper for the common people. The purpose of the newspaper would be to give them something *interesting* to read. Lev Nikolayevich has taken so strongly to the idea that he has invited Sytin (a publisher of popular books and reproductions) to come here to talk over the financing of the undertaking.

January 26, 1898

Lev Nikolayevich just came in and said: "I want to sit here with you." He showed me the two seven-pound weights he bought today to do gymnastic exercises with. He is very listless and keeps saying: "I feel like a man of seventy." The truth is, he will be seventy in August, that is, six months from now. This afternoon he swept away the snow and went skating. But he finds mental work irksome, and that is what worries him most of all.

February 1, 1898

Speaking of art, today Lev Nikolayevich mentioned various works which he considers great, for example: Shevchenko's *The Servant Girl*, Victor Hugo's novels, Kramskoi's drawing of a regiment marching past while a young woman, baby and wet-nurse watch them from the window, also Surikov's drawing of sleeping convicts in Siberia with one old man awake among them—a drawing he did as an illustration to Lev Nikolayevich's story "God Knows the Truth." He also mentioned the story (I don't remember whose—perhaps Hugo's) of a fisherman's wife with five children of her own who took the new-born twins of another fisherman's wife who died in childbirth. When the good woman's husband came home and she told him about the death of the mother, he said: "Well, I suppose we ought to take the babies in." Only then did she draw back the curtain and show him that she had already done so. Many other things were mentioned and discussed.

February 16, 1898

This evening Lev Nikolayevich read Schiller's *Robbers* and was enthusiastic about it.

March 14, 1898

Yesterday S. I. Taneyev called on us. . . . He played a piano arrangement of his beautiful symphony and asked Lev Nikolayevich for his opinion of it. With great gravity and respect Lev Nikolayevich told him that in his symphony, as in all the new music, there was no logical development of melody, rhythm, or even harmony. No sooner does one begin to follow the melody than it breaks off; no sooner does one catch the rhythm than it changes. One feels dissatisfaction all the time, whereas in a real work of art, one feels that it *could not be otherwise*, that one phrase flows inevitably from the preceding one. One says to oneself: "That is exactly how I would have done it."

April 15, 1898

Lev Nikolayevich announced today that he was leaving the day after tomorrow for the country to be with Ilya, that he found town life irksome, and that he had 1,400 rubles he wanted to distribute among the needy.

April 21, 1898

Taneyev called in the evening, and he and Lev Nikolayevich had a lively talk about many interesting things. Trubetskoi joined in. They talked about art, the affairs of the conservatoire, the brevity of life and the ability to order one's time so that every minute is used to good effect, bringing benefit to people and affairs.

June 12, 1898

In the evening Lev Nikolayevich, who was sitting on the balcony, gave us riddles to solve. He repeated his favourite problem about the mowers. This is how it goes:

There were two meadows, a large one and a small one. The mowers came to the large meadow and made hay all morning. During the afternoon, half of the mowers were sent to the small meadow. By the end of the day, the large meadow was completely cut, whereas on the small meadow, there was one day's work left for one man.

How many mowers were there? The answer is that there were eight. $^{3}/_{4}$ of the mowers completed the large meadow; $^{3}/_{8}$ the small meadow, that is, $^{2}/_{8}$ and

$^1/_8$, in other words, one man. If one man is $^1/_8$, then there must have been eight men in all.

That is one of Lev Nikolayevich's favourite problems, and he sets everybody the task of solving it.

August 22, 1898

This evening Lev Nikolayevich entertained us in a very lively and brilliant manner by suggesting subjects for stories, such as "The Mother," "The Coupon," "Kuzmich—Alexander I," and so on.

August 22, 1898

In the morning Lev Nikolayevich worked on *Resurrection* and was very much pleased with his work for the day. "He will not marry her," he said when I went in to him. "Today I've finished it; that is, I've decided on the outcome, and that makes me feel fine!"

September 11, 1898

Maria Nikolayevna, Lev's sister, is a very pleasant, friendly, sympathetic and gay person.... Several evenings ago, she and Lev Nikolayevich sat here reminiscing about their childhood; it was very amusing. Maria told us how once, when Lev was 15, they were driving to Pirogovo, and he ran after the carriage for five versts, just to show off; the horses were going at a trot, but Lev did not lag behind. When they stopped the carriage he was so out of breath that Maria burst into tears.

Another time, on the estate of Uncle Yushkov in the village of Panovo, Kazan Gubernia, in his desire to show off before some young ladies, he jumped into a pond in his clothes. Suddenly he discovered he was in over his head and would have drowned if some women who were making hay had not saved him by holding out their rakes.

September 28, 1898

Mikhail Stakhovich . . . drove Lev Nikolayevich back from Orel. Lev Nikolayevich had gone there to visit a prison in connection with his *Resurrection.* He is deeply engrossed in it, keeps working over the manuscript, and has sent several chapters abroad for translation. Today he had a long talk with a wandering religious fanatic, who was once exiled for taking part in strikes and had spent four months in jail. Lev Nikolayevich was fascinated by his stories.

November 14, 1898

Had a long talk with my husband about his work. . . . He says he has not been in such fine form since *War and Peace* and is very much satisfied with *Resurrection.*

December 16, 1898

Lev Nikolayevich again read to us from Jerome K. Jerome, and laughed as I have not seen him laugh for a long time.

January 14, 1899

We spent a lovely evening. Lev Nikolayevich read us two of Chekhov's stories: "Darling" and another, the name of which I have forgotten, about a suicide—more in the nature of an essay, I'd say.

January 17, 1899

Lev Nikolayevich received Myasoyedov and the warder of the Butyrskaya Jail, who gave him a great deal of information about the technical side of running a prison, about the prisoners, their life, etc. All of this serves as material for *Resurrection.*

June 26, 1899

Lev Nikolayevich has hit a snag: the scene of the Senate trial in *Resurrection.* He needs somebody who can tell him about the meetings of the Senate, and says in jest to everyone he meets: "Find me a senator." It's as if Lev Nikolayevich had gone away: he lives alone, completely engrossed in his work, goes walking alone, sits alone, comes down when meals are half over, merely to eat and disappear again. One can see that his mind is busy all the time and that this is beginning to wear on him. He has been working too hard.

December 31, 1899

On November 14 our Tanya married Mikhail Sergeyevich Sukhotin. We, her parents, were grieved to a degree comparable only to what we felt on the death of Vanya. Lev Nikolayevich broke down when he said good-bye to Tanya ... he cried as if he were parting with what he held dearest in life.

Lev Nikolayevich missed Tanya so much and wept so hard that he fell ill at last, on November 21, with severe pains in the stomach and liver.... Almost six weeks have passed now; he is recovering.

November 13, 1900

Tanya and her husband have come to see us. Lev Nikolayevich was so overjoyed to see Tanya he could hardly believe his eyes and kept saying: "So you've come? This is a surprise!"

November 24, 1900

Lev Nikolayevich attended a concert for the inmates of an insane asylum.

December 7, 1900

Lev Nikolayevich was invited to the Glebovs to hear a concert by 23 balalaika-players conducted by Andreyev. Their orchestra includes other folk instruments such as the *zhaleika* and the *gusli*.

It was lovely, especially the Russian songs, and also the Schumann waltz *Warum?* Lev Nikolayevich had expressed the wish to hear them and the concert was arranged specially for him.

February 12, 1901

We held a musicale at our house on the 9th.... When the guests had gone and Lev Nikolayevich was already in his dressing-gown, ready to go to bed, the students, several young ladies and Klimentova-Muromtseva (who had stayed on in the drawing-room) began to sing Russian, Gypsy and workers' songs. They laughed and danced.... Lev Nikolayevich sat down in a corner, encouraging them and expressing his approval. He sat up with them a long time.

March 6, 1901

We have lived through many events of a public rather than domestic nature. On February 24 Lev Nikolayevich's excommunication from the church was published in all the newspapers.... The edict was received with indignation by society, with surprise and dissatisfaction by the general public. For three days there were ovations in honour of Lev Nikolayevich, baskets of fresh flowers were brought to the house, and he was showered with telegrams, letters and messages. These expressions of sympathy for Lev Nikolayevich and indignation against the Synod and Metropolitans have still not stopped. That same day I wrote my letter and sent it to Pobedonostsev and the Metropolitans.... On the same Sunday, February 24, Lev Nikolayevich and Dunayev had occasion to cross Lubyanskaya Square, where a crowd of several thousand people had gathered. One of them noticed Lev Nikolayevich and said: "There he goes, the devil in human form!" Many people looked round, recognized Lev Nikolayevich and began to shout: "Hurrah for Lev Nikolayevich! Greetings, Lev Nikolayevich! Hail to the great man, hurrah!"

The crowd swelled, the shouts grew louder, the frightened cabmen drove off.

Finally a student drove up in a cab, helped Lev Nikolayevich and Dunayev into it, and a mounted gendarme, seeing the crowd seize the reins and bridle of the horse, intervened and began to push them back.

For several days now our house has been in a sort of festive uproar, with visitors calling from morning till night—crowds of them.

March 26, 1901

This has been an important day: Lev Nikolayevich has forwarded his letter "To the Tsar and his Adjutants."

March 30, 1901

It was quiet yesterday, and we spent a pleasant evening with Repin. He told us that at the *peredvizhniki* exhibition in St. Petersburg, where he is showing his portrait of Lev Nikolayevich (acquired by the Museum of Alexander III), there were two demonstrations. At the first one several people placed flowers in front of the portrait. At the second, last Sunday, March 25, 1901, a crowd gathered in the large exhibition room; a student got up on a chair and placed bouquets of flowers round the frame of the portrait, then he made a laudatory speech, after which there were cries of "Hurrah!" and, as if by command, flowers flew through the air. The result is that the portrait has been taken down and will not be shown in Moscow, to say nothing of the provinces.

July 3, 1901

Lev Nikolayevich fell ill during the night of June 27. . . . Today he said to me: "I am now at the crossroads, and the road ahead (death) is good, and that behind (life) is good. If I get over this now, it is only a postponement." He paused, lost in thought, and added: "I have many things I would still like to say to people."

When today our daughter Masha brought him his most recent article, just copied by N. N. Ghe, he was as happy to see it as a mother when her darling child is brought to her sick-bed. He immediately asked Ghe to make certain changes.

Yesterday he expressed great concern as to whether the victims of the fire in a distant village, for whom he had taken thirty-five rubles from me some days ago, had been here. He also asked me to tell him if anyone had come asking for aid.

July 22, 1901

Lev Nikolayevich is getting better.

Yesterday evening we received letters from Tula which Nikolai Obolensky read to us. They were all sympathetic, full of joy at Lev Nikolayevich's recovery. He listened to them, laughed and said: "If I show signs of dying again, I'll have to go through with it; no fooling this time. It would be a shame to start the whole business over again, with people calling, correspondents flocking here, letters and telegrams—all for nothing. No, that would be impossible. Positively indecent."

. . . Yesterday, when Lev Nikolayevich said that if he took sick again, decency required that he die, I observed: "Old age is a bore; I, too, would like to die soon." At that Lev Nikolayevich protested vehemently: "No, we must live; life is so wonderful!"

December 2, 1901, Crimea, Gaspra

We have been living here since September 8 for the sake of Lev Nikolayevich, but his health has not improved much.

December 23, 1901

Lev Nikolayevich is better; today he took a long walk and stepped in to see Maxim Gorky.

January 16, 1902

Tanya has copied, enclosed and mailed to Grand Duke Nikolai Mikhailovich the letter Lev Nikolayevich has written to Tsar Nicholas II. Nikolai Mikhailovich has promised to hand it to him when circumstances permit. It is a sharp letter.

January 25, 1902

The diagnosis was inflammation of the left lung. It has since spread to the right. The heart has not been functioning too well all this time.

January 26, 1902

My Lev is dying. . . . He read these lines somewhere the other day: "The old crone is groaning, the old crone is coughing; it's time for the old crone to crawl into her winding sheet." As he repeated the lines, he hinted they referred to him and tears came to his eyes. Then he added: "I am crying not because *I* have to die, but at the beauty of it."

January 27, 1902

Today I went to him . . . and asked: "Are you uncomfortable?" "No, I'm all right," he said. Masha said, "You feel bad, don't you, papa?" and he replied: "Physically—very bad, but morally—good, always good. . . ." His attitude to us all is grateful and loving; he seems to be pleased with the care we are giving him, for he keeps saying, "Splendid, splendid."

January 31, 1902

Yesterday he said to Tanya: "What's that they tell about Adam Vasilyevich (Count Olsufyev)—that he died easily? It's not at all easy to die, it's very hard; it's hard to discard this familiar frame," he added, indicating his emaciated body.

February 7, 1902

His condition is almost, if not to say entirely, hopeless. Since morning his pulse has been imperceptible, and he was given two injections of camphor.... Lev Nikolayevich said: "Here you are doing your best ... giving me camphor and all that ... but I am dying just the same."

Another time, he said: "Don't try to see ahead, for I myself never do."

February 20, 1902

Lev Nikolayevich is more cheerful. Yesterday he said to Dr. Volkov, "I seem to be destined to go on living." I asked him, "Why, are you so weary of life?" And suddenly he replied with spirit: "Weary of life? By no means. I feel fine." In the evening he expressed great concern for me, said I was tired, pressed my hand, looked at me lovingly and said, "Thank you, darling, I feel very well."

February 28, 1902

Today he said to Tanya, "It's good to be sick for a long time, it gives one time to prepare oneself for death."

Then, again, to Tanya, "I'm ready for anything: ready to live, and ready to die."

March 11, 1902

Lev Nikolayevich is improving. . . . He said, "I've been composing a poem, rephrasing the line:

I shall conquer all, said Gold.

I put it this way:

I shall crush and break, said Force,
I shall re-create, said Mind.

June 27, 1902, Yasnaya Polyana

Today we arrived home from the Crimea.

August 9, 1902

Lev Nikolayevich . . . is writing *Haji Murat* and the work did not go well today, it seems. He sat long at his solitaire, which is a sign that his mind is busy and he has not yet found what he needs.

August 11, 1902

Lev Nikolayevich told us that Leskov has taken his plot for a short story, distorted it and had it published. Lev Nikolayevich's idea was the following: A girl is asked to say who is the most important person, what is the most important time, and what she considers the most important occupation. She replies after some thought that the most important person is the person you are with at the moment, the most important time is the present, and the most important work is to do good to the person you are with at the moment.

February 20, 1903

Lev Nikolayevich has a visitor—an old man who served as a soldier under Nicholas I, fought in the Caucasus, and is now telling him what he remembers of those days.

July 10, 1903

Lev Nikolayevich is engrossed in the history of Nicholas I and is collecting and reading everything he can put his hands on. It will all go into *Haji Murat.*

January 14, 1909

Today I ... began copying the story Lev Nikolayevich has just finished.

The theme: revolutionaries, executions, and their cause. Could be interesting. But the method is the same—description of the life of the muzhiks. No doubt he will go on to poetize the revolution, with which, despite his Christian leanings, he undoubtedly sympathizes, for he hates everything that has to do with high position, or smacks of power.

April 7, 1910

We are angry about Lev Nikolayevich's having been refused permission to visit a murderer in prison. He needs it for his writing.

April 19, 1910

We played a gramophone outside the village library and many people gathered to hear it. Lev Nikolayevich talked to the peasants. Some asked him about the comet, others about the design of the gramophone.

July 8, 1910

Lev Nikolayevich read us a good short story by the new French writer, Mille. Yesterday he read us his "*La biche ecrasée*," which he also liked.

July 28, 1910

This evening Lev Nikolayevich read us a clever little story by Mille called "*Le repos hebdomadaire*" which he liked very much, and also began the story "*Le secret*."

October 14, 1910

Lev Nikolayevich . . . is reading Dostoyevsky's *The Karamazov Brothers* and says it's very bad: the descriptive passages are good, but the dialogue is execrable; it is always Dostoyevsky talking—not the characters. Their speech is not individualized.

October 19, 1910

In the evening Lev Nikolayevich was absorbed in the reading of *The Karamazov Brothers* and said: "Today I realize what people find in Dostoyevsky. He has wonderful ideas." Then he began to criticize him and pointed out once again that all the characters speak with Dostoyevsky's tongue and are too long-winded.

S. A. Tolstaya

RANDOM NOTES, FOR REFERENCE

Yasnaya Polyana, February 14, 1870

The other day, as I was reading the biography of Pushkin, it occurred to me that I could be useful to posterity, which will want to know the biography of L. N. Tolstoi. I could keep a record not of his daily life, but of the life of his mind, at least in so far as it is within my power. The thought has occurred to me before, but I have been too pressed for time.

Now is a good time to begin. *War and Peace* is finished and Lev Nikolayevich has not started any other serious work as yet.

All last summer he read and studied philosophy; he spoke admiringly of Schopenhauer and called Hegel a lot of blather. He thought much and agonizingly himself, and often said his brain ached, that it was too taxed with work, that everything was over for him, it was time for him to die, etc. Then his gloomy mood would pass. Later he began reading Russian folk tales and epics. His choice was dictated by his idea of writing or compiling children's readers for four different age groups, beginning with the youngest. He is enraptured by folk and epic tales. The epic of Danila Lovchanin has suggested the idea of writing a drama on the subject. Other tales and heroes, Ilya Muromets, for instance, and Alyosha Popovich, have given him the idea of writing a novel about them. He particularly admires Ilya Muromets. He said he wanted to show Ilya in his novel as a clever, cultivated man of peasant origin, who had obtained a university education. I cannot portray the type he described to me, but I remember his being exceptional.

After reading these epics and tales, all quite recently, he went through an endless number of plays: Molière, Shakespeare, Pushkin's *Boris Godunov* (which he neither praises nor likes), and is thinking of writing a comedy himself. In fact, he has begun it and told me the rather vapid plot, but I know that play writing is not his real work. He admitted as much the other day: "No, after trying one's hand at the epic genre" (that is, *War and Peace*) "it is difficult, and hardly worth while, to attempt the dramatic." But I can see that he is much taken with the idea of writing a comedy, and that the dramatic genre now focusses all his attention.

February 15

Yesterday evening Lev talked to me for a long time about Shakespeare and expressed great admiration for him; he considers him a dramatist of tremendous parts. As for Goethe, he called him an aesthete, with a sense of beauty and proportion but no dramatic gift—that is where he is weak. Lev wants to have a talk with Fet about his idol, Goethe. But Lev said that when Goethe argues and philosophizes he is indeed great.

As I was passing the door to Lev's study this morning, he asked me to come in. He spoke to me at length about Russian history and historical personages. He had just been reading Ustryalov's history of Peter the Great.

Types like Peter the Great and Menshikov interest him very much. He spoke of Menshikov as a strong and purely Russian character, who could come only from the common people. Of Peter the Great he said he was the tool of his times, that he was hard-tried, but that destiny had assigned him the mission of bringing Russia into contact with the European world. Lev is looking for a subject for a historical play and making notes of what he thinks good material. Today he wrote down the story of Mirovich, who wanted to free Ioann Antonovich from the fortress. Yesterday he told me he had again given up the idea of writing a comedy, but was thinking about a drama; he keeps saying how much work there is ahead.

We have just been out skating together and he performed all sorts of figures, skating on one foot, on both, backwards, in circles, and so on. He was as tickled as a child.

February 24, 1870

Today at last, after much hesitation, he got down to work. Yesterday he said that when he thinks seriously he again sees things in epic rather than dramatic form.

Several days ago he visited Fet, who told him the drama was not his genre, and so now it seems he has put aside the idea of a drama or comedy.

This morning he covered both sides of a sheet of paper in his minute hand. The action begins in a monastery, where he brings together a great many people, among them the personages who will later be the main characters.

Yesterday evening he told me he had been thinking about a type of married woman of the upper classes who had gone wrong. He said his aim was to show that she was to be pitied rather than blamed. As soon as he had a clear vision of his heroine, other types that he had conceived earlier (both men and women) grouped themselves about her. "Now everything is clear to me," he said. As for the character of the educated man of peasant origin whom he has had in mind for such a long time—he has decided to make him the steward of an estate.

March 27, 1871

He has been studying Greek doggedly ever since December. Sits up day and night over it. It's as though nothing on earth could interest or delight him more than a new Greek word or expression grasped for the first time. From Xenophon to Plato, then to the *Odyssey* and *Iliad* (which he is mad on). He likes to have me listen to him translate orally and check his translation with the Gnedich one, which he finds very good and conscientious. His progress in Greek (judging by what others know, even those who have finished the university course) seems phenomenal.

Sometimes on two or three pages of his translation I cannot find more than two or three errors or incomprehensible phrases.

He keeps telling me that he wants to write. He dreams of writing something as lucid, graceful and unburdened by the superfluous as a work of classical Greek art or literature. . . . I cannot explain, though I clearly perceive, what it is he has in mind. He says, "It is harder not to write than to write," meaning that the hardest thing is to keep oneself from writing empty words. Few writers are capable of this.

He is thinking of writing about Russian antiquity—is reading the *Chetyi-Minei* and the lives of the saints, and says that is our real Russian poetry.

March 19, 1873

Yesterday evening Lev suddenly turned to me and said, "I have written a sheet and a half and I think it's good." Assuming that this was another attempt to write about the times of Peter the Great, I did not pay much attention to his words. But later I learned that what he had begun is a contemporary novel about private life. It is strange how he hit on it. Sergei kept asking me for something to read aloud to our old aunt. I gave him Pushkin's *The Stories of Belkin*. But it seems the old lady fell asleep, and I, being too lazy to go downstairs and replace the book in the library, put it on the window-sill in the drawing-room. Next morning when we were having coffee Lev picked up the book, glanced through it and said how good it was. He found some critical notes in the back (the Annenkov edition) and said, "I have learned much from Pushkin. He is my father; he must be my teacher too." Then he read me a passage describing how the landlords lived and travelled along the highways in olden times; this helped him to understand much about the life of the nobility in the days of Peter the Great, a matter that had been giving him particular trouble. Under Pushkin's influence he himself began to write that evening. Today he resumed his writing and says he is satisfied with it.

October 4, 1873

The novel *Anna Karenina* was begun and completely sketched out in the spring. We went to the Samara Gubernia for the summer, and he did no more writing. But now he is polishing and changing and going on with the novel.

Kramskoi is doing two portraits of him and interfering somewhat with his work. There are discussions and arguments about art every day.

November 20, 1876

Just now Lev Nikolayevich told me how ideas for the novel come to him. "I sit downstairs in my study staring at the pretty white stitching on the sleeve of my dressing-gown. I wonder how people ever think of such designs, trimmings, embroideries, and then it strikes me there is a whole world of women's concerns—fashions, designs, and all the things women live by. I tell myself it must be a cheery sort of world, I realize that women really enjoy fussing with such things. My own thoughts, of course," (that is, thoughts about the novel) "centre upon Anna. And before I know it the stitching has presented me with a whole new chapter. Anna cannot share other women's joy in such things because she is alone, other women have turned their backs on her; she has no one to talk to about the things that make up the usual, purely feminine world of interests."

All autumn long he repeated: "My mind is asleep." Then suddenly, a week ago, something seemed to come to life in him. He has been working with a will and is pleased with his work and abilities. Today he sat down silently at his desk before taking his coffee and wrote on and on—for more than an hour—changing the chapter about Alexei Alexandrovich's relations with Lydia Ivanovna, and Anna's arrival in St. Petersburg.

NOTES ON REMARKS TOLSTOI MADE WHILE WRITING

November 21, 1876

He came up to me and said, "How tiresome writing is!"

"What?" I exclaimed.

"Well, here I've written that Vronsky and Anna took a room together in a hotel, but that's impossible. In any hotel in St. Petersburg they would have had to stay at least on different floors. From that it follows that they would have had to receive their friends separately, and so it all has to be rewritten."

March 3 [1887]

Yesterday Lev Nikolayevich went to his desk, pointed to his writing-pad and said: "I'm in a great hurry to finish this novel" (*Anna Karenina*) "and begin a new one. The theme of the new one is now very clear to me. For a book to be good the writer must be in love with the theme. In *Anna Karenina* I am in love with the theme of *the family*. In *War and Peace* I was in love with the theme of *the people* revealed during the War of 1812. In my new book I now see very clearly that it is the theme of the Russian people as a *conquering force* that will hold me in thrall." Lev Nikolayevich sees the operation of that force in the continual migration of the Russian people to new lands in southern Siberia, south-eastern Russia, along the Belaya River, to the city of Tashkent and other places.

Many are the stories one hears about these settlers. For instance, last summer we lived in Samara, and one day we two rode some twenty versts from our Samara farm to a Cossack settlement. On the way we passed a whole waggon train containing several families, including children and old people, all in the best of spirits. We stopped and asked an old man where they were going.

"To a new place—we're from the Voronezh Gubernia," he said. "Some of our folk left a long time ago for the Amur; we've had a letter from them and now we're on our way to join them."

Lev Nikolayevich showed a lively interest in their story at the time. Recently, while travelling by railway, he heard another story. It seems that a hundred or more Tambov peasants set out for Siberia of their own accord. When they reached the steppe near Irtysh, they were told it was Kirghiz land and they could not settle there. They went a little further. This time it proved to be Kirghiz land too and they were not permitted to settle. Their store of bread and money was almost spent by that time, so they stopped just long enough to plant some grain, gather it and thresh it, then they continued on their way. The following year they did the same, and continued moving east until they reached the Chinese frontier. There they found some land lying between two rivers, unused by either Chinese or Manchurians. They settled on it and named the rivers after the Tambov rivers they had left behind. Although the land was Chinese, it came to be considered Russian, and now it has unquestionably been conquered, not by war or bloodshed, but by the Russian muzhik's love of the soil. The Manchurians attack the settlers occasionally, but the Russians have built a fortress and defend themselves.

That is the idea of his future work as I understand it, and around that idea facts and types, still hazy, are grouping themselves.

October 25, 1877

Lev Nikolayevich has gone hunting with his borzoi dogs, but all morning he spoke to me of how the ideas of his new book keep growing, one after another. I cannot yet understand exactly what it is he intends to write—but then I do not think it is quite clear to him either; as I see it, the main idea will be the people, the strength of the people as revealed exclusively in their labour on the land. Today he said to me: "That proverb I read yesterday is very good: 'One son is no son, two sons—half a son, and three sons—a whole son!' That will be the epigraph at the beginning. I'll have an old man with three sons. One will be taken into the army, another will live at home and do nothing of moment, the third, his favourite, will learn to read and begin to think of things beyond the muzhiks' ken, making the old man unhappy. There you have it—a family drama, the sufferings of a prosperous muzhik." Then, I believe, the son who acquires an education comes into conflict with people of another, educated sphere, and this gives rise to a whole train of events. In the second part, according to Lev Nikolayevich, there will be a settler, a Russian Robinson Crusoe, who will set himself up on new lands (in the Samara steppe) and begin life from the very beginning, begin with satisfying the most elementary human requirements.

"I find it particularly hard, though interesting, to describe peasant life. When I describe my own I feel, so to speak, at home," said Lev Nikolayevich.

Anna Karenina is being published and will soon appear in a special edition. Today Lev Nikolayevich said: "The same idea is to run consistently through the new book." What idea?

March 1, 1878

Lev Nikolayevich is making a study of the times of Nicholas I; he is completely absorbed in the story of the Decembrists. He has been to Moscow and brought back a whole pile of books; sometimes he is moved to tears by what he reads.

January 31, 1881

...Lev Nikolayevich works seriously only in the winter. By the time he had studied the material and made some sketches for *The Decembrists* it was summer again and nothing serious had been written. In order to put his time to good use from the point of view of his health as well as his writing he began to take long walks along the highway (the Kiev Tract) which is about two versts from us. There in the summer one can meet hosts of pilgrims from all over Russia and

Siberia bound for Kiev, Voronezh, Trinity-Sergius Monastery and similar places of worship.

Lev Nikolayevich considers his Russian limited and imperfect, and so last summer he set himself the task of studying the language of the people. He talked to pilgrims and wayfarers and jotted down folk words, sayings, ideas and expressions. But the pursuing of that aim led to unexpected results.

Until about 1877, Lev Nikolayevich's religious views were undefined; if anything, he was indifferent to religion. He was never an absolute atheist, but neither did he subscribe to any *definite* faith.

On coming into close contact with the people, the pilgrims and religious mendicants, he was amazed by their firm, clear and unshakeable faith. His own scepticism suddenly seemed terrible to him and he turned heart and soul to the people and their faith.... He began to study the New Testament, translate it and write annotations. This work is in its second year and is about half done, I believe. He says it has brought him spiritual comfort. He has seen "the light," to use his expression, and it has changed his whole outlook on life. He used to think of mankind (so he told me) in terms of the small circle of people among whom he moved, but now millions of people have become his brothers. Formerly his estate and wealth were *personal* property—now they are only his to give away to the poor and needy.

Every day he sits down to his work surrounded by his books and works until dinner. He has grown much weaker in health and complains of headaches; his hair has turned grey and he has lost weight this winter.

He does not seem nearly as happy as I would like, and has become quiet, contemplative and morose. The gay and lively disposition that once used to cheer all of us hardly ever shines through now. I suppose it is the result of too much hard work. Nothing like the days of *War and Peace*, when, after describing a hunt or a ball, he would come out to us looking excited and gay, for all the world as if he himself had just indulged in those pleasures. The purity and tranquility of his own spiritual state is beyond question, but his suffering for the misfortunes of others—poverty, imprisonment, viciousness, oppression, injustice—is affecting his impressionable soul and consuming his being.

WHY KARENINA WAS ANNA AND WHAT SUGGESTED THE IDEA OF HER SUICIDE

We have a neighbour of about fifty, A. N. Bibikov, who is neither rich nor educated. Living at his place in the capacity of his housekeeper and mistress was a distant relative of his deceased wife, an unmarried woman of thirty-five or so. Bibikov hired a governess to teach his son and niece. She was a pretty German girl. He fell in love with her and asked her to marry him. His erstwhile mistress, whose name was *Anna* Stepanovna, left for Tula, allegedly to see her mother, but went instead with her bundle (which contained only one change of clothes) to the near-by station of Yasenki and there threw herself on the rails, under the wheels of a moving freight train. Later her body underwent a post-mortem. Lev Nikolayevich saw her, with her head crushed, her body naked and mutilated, in the Yasenki barracks. He was terribly shaken. He had known Anna Stepanovna as a tall, stout woman, Russian in face and character, a brunette with grey eyes, not beautiful but attractive.

T. A. Kuzminskaya

Tatyana Andreyevna Kuzminskaya, née Bers (1846-1925): the younger sister of Tolstoi's wife

MY LIFE AT HOME AND IN YASNAYA POLYANA

I was often allowed to go to the Tolstois, and I loved staying with them.

Maria Nikolayevna spent the winter of 1857-58 in Moscow; it was at her place that I first met her brother, Nikolai Nikolayevich. He was short and broad-shouldered, with deep expressive eyes. He had just returned from the Caucasus that winter and was in uniform.

I owe the best memories of my childhood to that remarkably clever and modest man. What poetic impressions I carried away from his improvised stories! He would sit down in a corner of the sofa with his feet under him, gather us children round him, and begin to tell us a long story or think up a little play, assigning various roles to us and acting with us.

Often, when we were in the midst of a play or story, Lev Nikolayevich would appear, perfectly groomed and in high spirits. We were all very glad whenever he came. He brought even more fun with him, coaching us in our roles, setting us riddles, doing gymnastics with us, making us sing. But usually he would glance at his watch and take his leave abruptly.

We had seen Lev Nikolayevich before. He used to visit our house as a childhood friend of my mother's. I remember him in full dress uniform at the time of the Crimean War, when he came to see us at Pokrovskoye. That was early in the summer of 1856. One evening a carriage drew up before our door. Lev Nikolayevich had come with Baron V. M. Mengden and Uncle Kostya. They had come to dinner, but were very late. The servants had been let off to go to church. We bestirred ourselves, and mother permitted us little girls to set the table and serve what was left of dinner.

My sisters rushed about with happy faces, as they did their unaccustomed task. I was constantly being pushed away with the words: "Put it down, you'll break it" or "That's too heavy, you can't lift it." They were admired and praised. I felt snubbed and envious; I wanted to be noticed and praised too. I stood at a distance and watched our guests.

Lev Nikolayevich talked a lot about the war, and my father plied him with questions. Unfortunately I cannot remember his stories. I remember, though, that they spoke of the song *How on September 8* and that after dinner we all begged him to sing it to us, but he refused. He probably felt awkward about just sitting down at the piano and singing. We all realized that it should have been managed differently. Uncle Kostya sat down at the piano and played the refrain. The tune was familiar to all of us, and Uncle Kostya played so well it was hard not to sing.

"Sing it with Tanya," suggested papa. "She sings well and will give you support. Tanya, come here and sing with Lev Nikolayevich."

"I know the tune but not the words," I said.

"Never mind, we'll teach them to you," said Uncle Kostya. "Stand here."

He recited the words of the first two stanzas.

"I'll tell you the rest as we go on."

"And now let's sing together," Lev Nikolayevich said to me laughingly.

He sat down beside Uncle Kostya and began in a sort of recitative. After singing two stanzas I broke off and began to listen with interest to him. Lev Nikolayevich went on alone with great feeling, Uncle Kostya helping him with his excellent accompaniment. I glanced at my father. He kept smiling happily all the time. The song amused us all, in fact.

"How witty, how dashing and catching the song is!" said my father. "I knew that Osten-Saken. So it was he who 'read the Psalter'!" and father laughed. Then they began to discuss the song word by word.

"Much of it was composed by soldiers," said Lev Nikolayevich. "I was not the only author."

Then Lev Nikolayevich asked Uncle Kostya to play Chopin, and he did. When he had played through a waltz, he started on a simple minuet, which reminded Lev Nikolayevich of their childhood.

"Lyubov Alexandrovna, do you remember how your Mimi taught us to dance to it?" said Lev Nikolayevich, going over to my mother. "It seems like only yesterday."

They began to talk about *Childhood* and *Adolescence*.

"You must have found much that was near and dear to you in those books," said Lev Nikolayevich.

"Yes, indeed," said my mother. "Your sister Maria with her big black eyes was just as I knew her in childhood—naive and a bit of a cry-baby."

"And how you described father, with his habit of twitching his shoulder! He recognized himself and laughed like anything," put in Uncle Kostya.

Lev Nikolayevich began to call on us every time he came to Moscow. No one thought anything of it. He came whenever he felt like it—in the daytime, in the evening, or for dinner, as did many other people. He was no more attentive to any one of us than to the others; he treated us all alike.

To Liza, he talked about literature, and even invited her to write for his journal *Yasnaya Polyana*. He gave her two subjects to write stories about for his pupils: "Luther" and "Mohammed." She did them both very well and he printed them in full as separate booklets.

He and Sonya played duets at the piano, and also chess. He often spoke to her of his school, and even promised to bring two of his favourite pupils to see us.

With me he cut capers as if I were a little boy. He would put me up on his back and ride me round all the rooms. He made me recite poems and answer his riddles.

He often gathered us about the piano and taught us to sing:

How dear the hours I spend with you,
No nightingale ere sang so sweet.

Also the *Cherubim Song* by Bortnyansky and many others.

One day he brought us Turgenev's *First Love* to read aloud. Mama objected to my hearing the story, but I begged so hard to be allowed to listen, and my sisters and Lev Nikolayevich backed my plea so well, that mama yielded but stipulated: "Very well, but only on condition that when you come to 'that' place she is to leave the room." Then she whispered something to Lev Nikolayevich I could not catch.

The reading began. As always, Lev Nikolayevich read beautifully. We were all spellbound by both his reading and the story.

As I did not know where the forbidden place would come, I took the precaution of feigning sleep in advance and was not disturbed; as a result I heard the whole story. But I could not understand where "that" forbidden place was. When he finished reading and the discussion began, Lev Nikolayevich said:

"The love of the sixteen-year-old son, a mere boy, was the deep, genuine love that comes only once in a lifetime, whereas the father's love was vile and corrupt."

His words sank deep into my heart, and I remembered my love for Kuzminsky and Sonya's for Polivanov. "That means our love was real," I told myself with a touch of pride.

At other times Lev Nikolayevich called for us and took us all on long outings to see the Kremlin and its walls, the cathedrals, and so on. On such occasions he wore us out so we could hardly drag our feet behind us.

We younger members of the family began to look forward to his visits.

He was not like other people, nor like the usual run of visitors we had. He did not have to be received and entertained in the drawing-room. He was all over the house. His interest and sympathy included old and young, even our servants.

Many were the talks he had with our nurse, Vera Ivanovna, and old Trifonovna. His hearers always came away charmed. Wherever he was he made things gay and interesting. There was not a soul in our house who did not love him. Even our apathetic batman, Prokofi the Ukrainian, said of him:

"As soon as the count comes, he cheers us up."

Lev Nikolayevich began to walk or ride out to see us in Pokrovskoye regularly and invent all kinds of outings.

I remember that once, after a heavy rain-storm, he persuaded us to take a walk to the village of Tushino, four versts away.

Disregarding our mother's warning that we were likely to have another downpour, we decided to go.

Popov (who had dined with us), Pako, Petya, we three sisters and Lev Nikolayevich strode along, chattering gaily as we went.

Niel Alexandrovich was in excellent form and entertained us with his witticisms. Then the conversation turned to more serious things. Lev Nikolayevich expressed his views about the inefficacy of our school system to Popov.

"If I live long enough, I am determined to write a grammar and arithmetic after a new system," he said.

I recalled that conversation and our walk to Tushino when the grammar and arithmetic were published in the seventies.

. . . I am ill. My fever keeps rising by the hour. My moans and delirium frighten Agafya Mikhailovna and she wakes up my sister. In ten minutes, as I learned later, Sonya and Lev Nikolayevich were at my side. . . . According to Agafya Mikhailovna, I got out of bed and began to walk in my delirium.

On the following day, when my fever was down, Lev Nikolayevich asked me what I had felt. I . . . told him I had seen a boundless field covered in places with thick white cobweb. No matter where I turned, it crept after me and clung to my neck, feet and chest. I could not breathe, could not escape.

"So that was why you kept saying in your delirium: 'It's clinging to me, clinging to me! Take it off!'" he said. "And when Sonya asked, 'What shall I take off?' you moaned pitifully and kept saying, 'It's clinging to me . . .' but you never said what."

He later had Prince Andrei in *War and Peace* see the same vision in his delirium.

And how many times after that when he himself was ill and people asked him how he felt, did he answer pitifully, imitating my voice, "It's clinging to me . . . clinging to me. . . ."

At the beginning of May, 1864, guests arrived; the Dyakov family and Maria Nikolayevna Tolstaya with her daughters.

Lev Nikolayevich was always glad to see us enjoying ourselves. Once, after watching our charades, he said:

"Why don't you put on a play?"

"Where shall we find one? It would take too long if we sent for one," Sonya objected.

"Write one for us," I said.

"Very well, I'll try."

Three days later he brought us a comedy he had written, called *The Nihilist*. If I remember correctly it was in one act. We distributed the parts and began to memorize our lines.

It was about a young married couple, very much in love, living a quiet and secluded life in the country. Suddenly they have visitors: his mother-in-law, some cousins, girl friends and a student with ideas.

A noisy and merry time begins for them. The excitement shakes the young couple out of their accustomed rut. At first they are very contented and happy. Then the husband conceives a dislike for the student, who is always propounding his ideas and negating everything that people believe in. He is young, handsome and insolent; one of the young cousins is carried away by his eloquence and falls in love with him. To the husband it seems that his wife, too, is interested in the student. He becomes jealous, and their peaceful life is disturbed by scenes of jealousy. The wife, who knows herself to be above suspicion, is despondent and angry.

When Maria Nikolayevna was invited to take part in the play she refused, and Lev Nikolayevich said:

"But, Masha, I've got to have a pilgrim in the play and you're the only one who could play the part."

"Very well, then," agreed Maria Nikolayevna. "But don't give me any lines, I'll never learn them. Just mark my entrances and exits and I'll see for myself what has to be said."

And he did as she asked.

He found the rehearsals very amusing. He made many corrections, laughed and showed the girls how to act their parts. This comedy was his first attempt to write for the stage.

I remember his saying:

"How pleasant it is to write for the stage! The words come of themselves!"

Maria Nikolayevna did not rehearse with us, but watched us as we went through our parts with close attention.

The first scene depicts the joy and excitement attending the arrival of the guests. Then come several scenes between the student and the cousins, his eloquent defence of nihilism, interspersed with bold and suggestive bids for the affection of one of the cousins. Then there is a conversation with the mother-in-law. She is shocked and rebukes him lightly. That is followed by a scene of jealousy between the husband and wife. Then the scene where I (the wife) sit alone at a table set for tea and tearfully bemoan my lot—the injustice and jealousy of my husband. The door opens and Maria Nikolayevna appears.

If I had not known that it was Maria Nikolayevna, I would never have recognized her. Her clothes, make-up, gait and the bundle on her back made a genuine pilgrim. Only her big black eyes gave her away. With what amazing verisimilitude she bowed and leaned on her staff, handed me the communion bread and sat down at the table at my invitation! It was real and natural, not at all as though she were acting. I glanced at Lev Nikolayevich and found him beaming with satisfaction.

I asked the pilgrim where she came from and what she had seen.

She began to tell me her story.

She struck such a true note, her gestures were so apt that on hearing the irrepressible laughter of the audience, and especially Lev Nikolayevich's infectious laugh, I could no longer remain sad myself and, covering my face with my kerchief, laughed behind it to my heart's content.

It was as though Maria Nikolayevna were putting into her story everything she had heard such women say in the course of many years.

When I went out, leaving the pilgrim alone, she quickly snatched sugar, bread and rusks from the table and put them in her bag, casting furtive glances at the door as she did so.

Suddenly the door opened and in came the student. All he needed was a hearer to inspire him to go at it again, for all he was worth. Now it was the pilgrim's turn to listen. As usual the student's harangue began with something about the rights of women—that women should be the equals of men, and the first step was to cut off their braids.

"Lord, what is he saying? Heaven help you, lad! A maid's braids are cut off when she goes bad—and you want to bring such shame on innocent girls! Who ever heard of such a thing!" cried the pilgrim, shaking her head.

But the student was not to be put off. He denied duty to one's parents and called religious worship a waste of time. The pilgrim listened in horror. When he went so far as to compare God to the oxygen in the air, she picked up her bundle in fright, crossed herself, spat to keep off the evil spirit and ran out.

However, it is through her influence that the husband and wife are at last reconciled.

The play has a happy ending: the student is given the gate, the enamoured cousin finds consolation, and it ends up with the wife singing some couplets to the melody of Glinka's *I Love You*. I only remember the last verse:

It has been hard on me, I own.
But all my grief I will forget,
And happiness will bless us yet,
For you I love, and you alone.

When we were rehearsing the lines I said to Lev Nikolayevich: "But why do I use the formal 'you' instead of 'thou' in speaking to him after we have made up our quarrel?"

To which he said:

"Go ahead and sing it as it is—that's the only way I could make it rhyme."

For a while after his operation* I took dictation from him on the novel *1805* (later called *War and Peace*). I can still see the strained look on his face as he paced the floor, holding his injured arm and dictating to me.

"Commonplace! No earthly good!" he would comment to himself as if I were not there.

Or simply:

"Cross that out."

His tone was peremptory, his voice expressed impatience, and often as he dictated he would change one and the same place three or four times. Sometimes he dictated quietly and smoothly as if speaking a piece he had memorized and then the tense look on his face relaxed. But such occasions were rare. Mostly he dictated quickly and in impetuous bursts.

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* In September 1864, Tolstoi fell off his horse and broke his arm. Owing to careless setting, it healed crooked and had to be rebroken and reset.

Our sessions usually closed with the words:

"I've tortured you to death. Now run off and go skating."

Sometimes we went to the theatre accompanied by Lev Nikolayevich. I remember how much he admired Ostrovsky's new play *Practical Jokers*. I looked at him at the moment when the old man finds the package of money in the street, opens it with trembling fingers, discovers that it is empty and hears the mocking laughter of those who have played the joke on him. There were tears in Lev Nikolayevich's eyes.... I also remember how transported he was by the music of Rossini's opera *Wilhelm Tell*, especially the first two acts.

When the novel *Anna Karenina* came out it was rumoured in Moscow that Stepan Arkadyevich Oblonsky seemed to have been taken from Vasily Stepanovich Perfilyev. The rumour reached Perfilyev himself. Lev Nikolayevich did not refute it. After reading the description of Oblonsky having his morning coffee, Vasily Stepanovich said to Lev Nikolayevich:

"See here, Lev, I never ate a whole loaf of bread and butter with my coffee. That's going too far!"

Lev Nikolayevich laughed.

One evening I was asked to sing, and I chose songs which enjoyed general popularity: Glinka's *I Remember That Delightful Moment* and *To Her*. Usually Lev Nikolayevich accompanied me when I sang the latter, and he did it wonderfully well.

"There is grace and passion in it," he said. "Glinka wrote it when he was tipsy. You sing it well."

At tea an interesting conversation started with Samarin about theft, the reform and the law. Samarin expressed indignation at the present moral laxity in the villages and our inept laws. Lev Nikolayevich blamed the landlords for the savagery and corruption of the people but denied the need for any extreme legal measures. He lost his temper and argued with asperity and rancour. Samarin presented his views calmly and tersely. Finally, the argument touched on the most extreme measure of all—the death sentence. Samarin said:

"The death sentence is necessary in Russia."

Lev Nikolayevich blanched and hissed angrily:

"It is horrifying to be in your company."

Tolstoi's love for the people goes back to his childhood. It amazed me to see how fond he was of the boys who were his pupils. He showed great concern for and interest in their welfare. Once he told me about an old woman named Vlasova who lived in the village. She had been paralyzed for ten years and lived in a tiny filthy hut. I began going to see her and taking such small gifts as I could. Whenever I would come out of her hut my dress would smell of onions, baked bread, manure and other disgusting things. More than once I took away a hateful roach or something even worse.

When I complained to Lev Nikolayevich he laughed and said:

"Excellent! You must go more often!"

S. L. Tolstoi

Sergei Lvovich Tolstoi (1863-1947):
the writer's eldest son

ESSAYS ON THE PAST

MY FATHER IN THE SEVENTIES

In childhood we three older children (that is, my sister Tanya, my brother Ilya and I) adopted a rather unusual attitude towards our father—different, I should say, from that of other children to their fathers. For us his judgements were final, his counsel—law. We really believed he knew everything we thought and felt, even if he did not come out with it. I squirmed under the gaze of his small, piercing grey eyes, and when he asked me about anything (and he liked to ask questions I did not care to answer) I could not lie or even evade an answer.

Our greatest pleasure in childhood was to be with him, to have him take us with him when he went walking or hunting or travelling, to have him tell us a story or do gymnastic exercises with us. It was not in his nature to show signs of affection; he rarely kissed us or addressed us in terms of endearment, nor did he give us presents or buy us toys. But we were always aware of his love for us and knew whether he was pleased with our behaviour or not. If he called me "Sergulevich" instead of the usual "Seryozha," I accepted it as a caress. Sometimes he would come up softly from behind and cover my eyes with his two hands. It was not hard to guess who it was. Or he would seize both my hands and say, "Climb up," and I would clamber up his body with his help and sit or stand on his shoulders. In that position he would take me round the room, then suddenly send me plunging head first through the air and set me on my feet. We adored these acrobatics, and if father did them with one of us, say, with me, my sister Tanya or brother Ilya would immediately begin to shout, "Me too! Me too!"

We even took a peculiar delight in the smell of father's tobacco (he was still a smoker then), of his flannel shirt and wholesome sweat.

One of our favourite pastimes was gymnastics. It usually began this way: we would stand in a row with father in front of us and try to repeat his movements exactly, turning the head to the right, to the left, up and down; bending and straightening the arms, raising and lowering first the right, then the left leg, squatting down, bending forward and touching the floor with straight knees, and so on. We even had a horse to vault over.

In general father attached great importance to our physical development. He encouraged gymnastics, swimming, running, high jumping, horseback riding, and all kinds of games including *lapta* and *gorodki*. Sometimes when we were out walking together he would say, "Let's see who can run the fastest," and we'd all race after him.

Father hardly ever punished us, did not make us stand in the corner, rarely scolded or even reproached us; he never beat us or pulled our ears or anything of the sort, but he had other ways of showing how he felt. He showed us his displeasure by ignoring us and refusing to take us with him, or by letting drop an ironical remark.

If one of us laughed while telling a story that was supposed to be funny or clever, father would say: "There are three kinds of joke-tellers. The worst kind, who laugh while telling a joke, though their hearers do not laugh; the middling kind, who laugh together with their hearers; and the best kind, who do not laugh, leaving it to their hearers." He advised us never to laugh when telling a funny story to spare ourselves the embarrassment of seeing our listeners look bored.

When I went out of my way to be witty or make a pun he would say: "Your witticisms are a lottery. There are very few winning numbers; most of them are empty tickets with the word '*allegri*' written on them." And every time I made what I hoped would sound like a clever remark, and it fell flat, he would say, "*Allegri!*" or else "That was a loser!"

When, quite by accident, I broke a dish, tore or soiled my own or someone else's clothes, or forgot a task I had been asked to do, and if I tried to excuse myself by saying I had not done it on purpose, he would say:

"That's why I am scolding you—for doing it accidentally. You must try not to do anything accidentally."

Another of his admonitions was:

"When you do a thing, do it well. If you can't or don't want to do it well, don't do it at all."

Father did not like familiarity between friends or even relatives. His comment was: "There are friends who slap each other on the back and say, 'You nice old scoundrel!' or 'You darling old dog!' That is '*amicoshonstvo*' " (the friendship of pigs).

When father wrote, neither he nor any other member of the family said he was *working*, but always that he was *occupied*. Until his so-called crisis he did not occupy himself much in the summer, but took a rest for three months. The remainder of the year, except for a few days in autumn when he sometimes spent all day hunting, he worked almost daily. When he was occupied, nobody dared go to his room, not even my mother; he needed complete quiet and the certainty that there would be no interruption. When his study was situated in the room with a large Italian window, both its doors, the one to the dining-room and the one to the drawing-room, were locked. We even entered the adjoining rooms quietly and cautiously—such were our orders. To play the piano in the dining-room at such a time was out of the question, as father said he *could not help listening to music, no matter how softly it was played.*

In 1878 father had a hut built in Chepyzh, where he went in the summer to write and study.

After working father would go walking or riding horseback. Sometimes there was purpose in his excursions, as when he attended to some business on the estate, went hunting, visiting or to the station. If he had no purpose, he would usually go to Zaseka (the state forest) or the highway.

The aimless walks were probably the most beneficial, for on them he collected material for his writings.

What he liked about the huge state forest with its clearings, little-used roads, groves and ravines was the wildness of the scene, its seclusion, luxuriant plant life, and the sense of the primeval it conveyed. There Tolstoi found a retreat from his humdrum surroundings, contemplated nature almost untouched by the hand of man, and indulged in meditation. He particularly liked to discover and follow a barely perceptible footpath to parts he had never seen before.

Father knew how to read as few people do. He had an exceptional memory for what he read and distinguished between books that must be read word for word without omitting anything and those from which only the essence is to be gleaned. During the years when we lived at Yasnaya Polyana he read a great deal. He learned Greek, collected material for his *Grammar* and his *Reader*, for the novels he had intended writing which dealt with the times of Peter the Great and of the Decembrists, read the *Chetyi-Minei*, studied Russian epics and proverbs, and, at the end of the seventies, the New Testament and critiques of the Scriptures.

In addition he was always reading foreign novels, especially English and French ones. In English literature, his preference was for Dickens, Thackeray and the domestic novels of Trollope, Mrs. Humphry Ward, George Eliot, Brighton, Braddon, etc.

As is well known, he rated Dickens above all other British novelists. He found Thackeray rather cold, and of the rest especially praised *Adam Bede* and *The Vicar of Wakefield.*

Of the French, he read Victor Hugo, Flaubert, Droz, Felier, Zola, Maupassant, Daudet, the Goncourts and others.

He particularly valued *Les misérables* and *Le dernier jour d'un condamné* by Victor Hugo, and, among the realists—the works of Maupassant. He was indifferent to Flaubert, Balzac and Daudet, but read Zola with interest, although he considered his realism too deliberate and his descriptions too detailed and unimportant.

"In Zola they eat a goose for twenty pages. That's too long," he remarked about one of the episodes in *La terre.*

He did not read much German fiction. I cannot remember his reading any of the German writers except Schiller, Goethe and Auerbach. He advised us to read Schiller's *The Robbers* and Goethe's *Werther* and *Hermann and Dorothea.*

He can hardly be said to have read much Russian literature that came out in the seventies. He scarcely read the periodicals at all, and as for fiction, he merely glanced through what came to hand. Turgenev's books, as they appeared, interested him most of all. As for the books of Dostoyevsky, some, among them *The Adolescent*, were, if I remember correctly, not known to him. He did not like *Forests* and *Mountains* by Andrei Pechersky (Melnikov), and said, "The tone is false. He plays with words from the folk dialect, but does not know the life of the peasants." Another of his remarks about Melnikov-Pechersky was: "It is false writing. For example, somewhere Pechersky says: 'The Russian never spares a tree. He will break a century-old oak to make a shaft of it.' He used the word '*ronit*' (injure, break) to show he knew the language of the people. What he did not know is that the muzhik will never make a shaft out of an old oak, but will always cut down a young birch for that purpose." Speaking of historical novels like *Yuri Miloslavsky* and *Count Serebryany* (imitations of Walter Scott, whom father disliked), he called attention to their misrepresentation of the customs of the period; he dismissed the historical novels of Danilevsky, Mordovtsev, Salias, Solovyov and others with contempt.

He advised us children not to hurry with the classics so that later, when we were older and could understand them better, they would not have lost their freshness. On the other hand, he had a poor opinion of special children's literature. He advised us to read world-famous books of interest to both children and adults: *Robinson Crusoe, Don Quixote, Gulliver's Travels, Les misérables* by Victor Hugo, the books of Alexandre Dumas, Dickens (*Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield*), etc. In Russian literature he particularly recommended the prose of Pushkin and Gogol, Turgenev's *A Hunter's Sketches* and Dostoyevsky's *Notes from a Dead House*.

He did not advise us to read any of his own works, with the exception of some stories in the *Grammar* and *Reader*.

Lev Nikolayevich had this to say about how Russian literature was taught: "Usually very little is said of the epics and chronicles or about Russian writers before the age of Peter the Great, of the correspondence of Ivan the Terrible and Kurbsky, the biographies of Archbishop Avvacum, Kotoshikhin, Pososhkov and others. And yet that is serious and informative literature."

With regard to Pushkin, he advised me, during my adolescence, to read *The Tales of Belkin* first of all. He had the highest opinion of the language, style and form of Pushkin's prose. He considered *The Queen of Spades* a model of perfection.

Father's attitude to verse was negative on the whole. He said that poets were cramped by the rhyme and rhythm into which their language and imagery had to be fitted; they lacked freedom in expressing their ideas. He valued only a few poets: Tyutchev, Lermontov, Fet and, of course, Pushkin. When I remarked once that Pushkin thought in verse, as distinct from the modern poets, he agreed with me.

He regarded Pushkin, the man, with sympathy. He considered him a sincere man who did not close his eyes to his own weaknesses, and who, if he compromised, did so only in his actions, never in his convictions. I do not remember where he heard the story of Pushkin's conversation with a friend whom he encountered on Nevsky Prospekt:

"I feel like a blackguard."

"Why?" asked his friend.

"I just met the tsar and stooped to speak to him."

At the end of the seventies a copy of the magazine *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* was received in Yasnaya Polyana. Father read it with interest, especially Shchedrin and *Letters From the Village* by Engelhardt. He read us excerpts from Shchedrin's "Abroad"; the "Conversation Between a Boy in Trousers and a Boy Without Trousers" made him laugh till he cried.

I also remember his reading aloud from "Messieurs and Mesdames Pompadours" by Shchedrin. It is the story of how a Tatar from an inn drove the "Yamudsky prince" to St. Petersburg. He found the prince's impression of St. Petersburg very funny: "Only Pompadours—no rabble—nice clean town." When father returned from a trip to St. Petersburg, he said ironically, "Only Pompadours—no rabble—nice clean town!"

Father hardly read the newspapers at all then. It seems to me the only paper we received at Yasnaya Polyana was the *Moskovskiye Vedomosti*, sent to us by Katkov.

I consider myself extremely fortunate to have heard my father's living speech, which was so rich and imaginative. He had an exceptional memory and was highly impressionable.... How well he expressed in words everything he saw, heard, thought or read! How many new and unexpected observations I heard him make about things that others fail to notice or comment upon! On the other hand, his speech never touched on such trivialities as gossip, dull stories about oneself, vulgar anecdotes, and the like. One felt that the story or thought he was relating was closely connected with his work.... He did not like to talk or, for that matter, act without a purpose, or, as we say, "*zrya*" (for nothing). He disliked the very word "*zrya*" and it seems to me he never used it in his writings.

Father loved and appreciated the beauty of forests, fields, meadows and sky as few others do. He would often say, "How many bounties God has given us! Nature is infinitely varied, every day differs from the one before it, every year there is unexpected weather."

He had the vision of a landscape painter, although he considered this form of art an inferior one. Once, for instance, I heard him exclaim: "How lovely the yellow rye looks against the background of the dark oak forest. There's a theme for a landscape painter!"

Sometimes he would say of the sky and clouds, "What wonderful light! If an artist painted such a picture no one would believe him, he would be accused of letting his imagination run away with him."

On returning from his walks he sometimes brought back a flower rare in our parts, or an unusually large ear of grain; in the spring—a spray of pink hazel-nut blossom, in the autumn—a leaf of bright tint or a quaintly shaped seed pod. He would admire them himself and show them to us.

On clear nights he would tell us about the starry sky. At one time he was interested in astronomy (visual, not theoretical astronomy) and he would point out and name the stars and explain the difference between a star, a planet and a comet.

Sometimes, too, he would tell us about the life of the peasants, especially the peasants of Yasnaya Polyana, whom he knew to a man. It was his custom to go to their homes to speak to them, occasionally give them advice, discuss their problems and answer their questions. They confided their family affairs, even their secrets, to him. Once he told us very confidentially that the runaway convict Rybin was hiding in the home of the Kurnosenkovs, in the village.

Another time he told us that one of the peasants had fallen into and been buried in the pit near the highway where they dug for sand. He went with the peasants who dug out the body and said they went about it heroically, ignoring the danger of being buried in the sand themselves.

He knew the peasants' work down to the minutest detail and would cross-examine us: "Now, then, tell me the names of the different parts of the harness and how it is assembled," or: "Name the parts of the plough." And since our knowledge was anything but complete, he would supply the missing information himself.

Occasionally he would communicate to us what was occupying his mind at the time. . . . Once it was his ideas on the measure of time. He said there were two measures of time, one of them objective, the other subjective. Objectively, we measure time in terms of years, days, hours, etc., and subjectively—in terms of what we have lived through. Measured by the amount and strength of the impressions a child of three receives in the course of one year, the year is equal to a third of its life. For a person of thirty, however, a year is merely $^1/_{30}$ of his life. For a child everything is new and important; one year for him is a vast period of time. That explains why the older we are, the more quickly time seems to fly.

In reference to books that had become popular, he was fond of quoting the Latin saying: "*Habent sua fata libelli pro capite lectoris*" (books have their own fates, depending on the heads of their readers). He observed that usually only the first half of the saying, that books have their own fate, was quoted, and so its real meaning was lost, namely, that the success of a book depends upon its readers' intellectual development.

THE LIFE OF OUR FAMILY BEFORE THE AUTUMN OF 1881

In the winter of 1871-72 I was studying hard. My mother taught me Russian and French, a little history and geography, and the piano; Hannah Tardsey taught me English; my father—Russian too (not grammar) and arithmetic. He was compiling his *Grammar* at the time and trying it out on us, his children. He told us stories and had us retell them in our own words. Most of them were stories that later went into his *Reader*. He considered himself a poor mathematician, and for that very reason a good teacher of mathematics. He said that since he had had to work hard to acquire what knowledge he possessed, it was sound knowledge, well remembered, and that was why he could explain it clearly to others. In teaching, as in everything else, he searched for new methods. He taught us to use an abacus. He made us learn the multiplication table only up to five, then to multiply from six to ten on our fingers as follows: subtract from each of the two numbers to be multiplied the number five, then count off the remainder on the fingers of both hands, bending them down, then add up the bent fingers, which gives the answer in tens; the number of unbent fingers on one hand was to be multiplied by the number of unbent fingers on the other, the result then to be added to the result already obtained in tens. For example, the task is to multiply 7 by 9. Subtracting five from each multiplier, we get two bent fingers on one hand, and four bent fingers on the other. Their sum is 6, multiplied by ten is 60. The remaining unbent fingers are then multiplied: 3 on one hand multiplied by 1 on the other gives 3. Hence 7 by 9 is 60 plus 3, or 63.

I do not remember whether it was then or later that father set us his favourite popular riddle about the geese: a flock of geese in flight is met by a goose. Says the goose: Greetings, one hundred geese! The geese reply: We are not one hundred geese, but we would be if there were as many as we are, and as many again, plus one-half and then one-quarter again, and yourself added in for good measure.

In the winter of 1872-73 father experimented with what is known as the Lancaster method of teaching. He had me, my sister Tanya, and even my brother Ilya, although the latter was not yet seven, teach the village children reading and writing. The children were brought to our house where, in the entrance hall and adjacent rooms, each of us taught his little group of scholars. The experiment was quite successful. My sister Tanya's pupils and my own acquired elementary knowledge. But Ilya proved too young; one day he got into a fist fight with his charges.

In the winter of 1875-76 father continued the writing of *Anna Karenina*, played the piano quite a lot, and busied himself with the organization of a teachers' seminary. Unfortunately, his novel plan for a teachers' seminary was never realized. He aimed to train village teachers from among the local peasants. Such teachers, living at home in their own villages and continuing to till the soil, would be satisfied with a small remuneration and would not seize the first opportunity to change their situations for something more profitable.

Early in March father journeyed to Moscow and St. Petersburg. In St. Petersburg he collected material for his future books. He inspected the dungeons of the Peter and Paul Fortress where the Decembrists were incarcerated, spoke with Decembrists or people who had known them, etc. He declared his intention of writing a novel about the Decembrists, and said that just as he had written *War and Peace* fifty years after 1812, so now he would be writing about the Decembrists fifty years after 1825. He considered this interval long enough to enable him to see the period in historical perspective, and short enough to keep the memory of it fresh. In Moscow he met the Decembrists Belayev and

Svistunov. He told us the story he had heard from the latter.

"When Svistunov and Zavalishin, both in irons, were being transported to Siberia in a state courier's troika, Zavalishin pointed to his shackles and said, 'I was to have been the tsar's aide-de-camp, and instead—look at me!' 'That was when I understood he was not one of us,' said Svistunov. '*We* were proud of our irons!' "

My father had a particularly high opinion of the staunch character of the Decembrist Lunin, and told us how Lunin, a convict tied to a cart, found pleasure in entertaining the stout German major who was his guard and making him laugh.

I cannot remember whether it was in Moscow or St. Petersburg that father unexpectedly found himself face to face with Alexander II. The meeting occurred by chance as father was leaving the photograph studio of Levitsky (or perhaps Dyagovchenko?). As he moved aside to let the Emperor pass, their eyes met. He was amazed to see the steel-grey eyes of Alexander filled with fear.

"Like an animal when it is being baited," he said later. "Did Alexander think that I, a stranger to him, was going to kill him?"

Lev Nikolayevich's unfavourable opinion of poets is well known. But there were certain ones among them whom he admired. Among the favoured few he counted Fet. I remember his praising Fet's poems *Now the Willow Spreads Its Downy Branches* and *Again the Unseen Hand. . . .*

Speaking of the first two verses of the poem *Autumn* Lev Nikolayevich said: "If one were to say in prose: 'When frail gossamer carries the threads of fair days to come . . .' it would sound silly, whereas in poetry a vivid and beautiful picture is conveyed in a short, perhaps incorrect sentence."

In the poem *The Dahlias*, he found the statement "... they stand, seared by the frosts of early morn" very apt and precise.

Of the well-known poem *The Whisper, the Faint Breath* ... father had approximately the following to say in the eighties: "A masterly poem; there is not a single predicate in it. Every expression is an image. Perhaps the only inept expression is 'a hazy cloud of roses red.' But read the poem to any muzhik and he will wonder wherein lies not only the beauty, but even the sense. It is a piece for a small circle of epicureans in art."

I also remember that father praised the poems *Autumn* ("The Swallows Are Fled..."), *Stars* ("I Stood Long..."), *Men Sleep...*, *There Are Winter Nights...*, etc. I have not, of course, exhausted Lev Nikolayevich's remarks on Fet's poetry.

At one time Fet and Turgenev were quite close, but I do not think they were friends, for Fet certainly took pleasure in criticizing Turgenev personally and also his works.

Once I heard him remark, referring to the place in *Asya* where she cries to those taking off in the boat, "You have entered the path of moonlight on the water...": "Asya could not have seen that, because on coming into the moonlight, the boat would have shattered the reflection by disturbing the water. Turgenev just invented it."

At first father agreed with him, but some time later as he stood on a river-bank he saw a boat actually come into the path of light shed by the moon without shattering it, and he recalled Fet's criticism and admitted that Turgenev rather than Fet was right.

1898-99

Father was working on *Resurrection.* He had left it to N. L. Obolensky to invite my friend Tsurikov (a lawyer and member of the Chern Uyezd Court) to Yasnaya Polyana. He wanted Tsurikov to check his description of Katya Maslova's trial and correct what was wrong in it. Tsurikov arrived at Yasnaya Polyana on the morning of October 25 (1898). In his unpublished diary he gave this account of the corrections he made:

"I sat down immediately to read the rough script of *Resurrection.* The old man kept coming over to see what part I was reading at the moment. He asked me to make my corrections directly in the text, crossing out the errors and writing the corrections above them. . . . I had no time to read Part III, but promised to return to Yasnaya in a few days to complete the reading and write the indictment. I found it rather frightening; it takes courage to revise a text written in the hand of Tolstoi. He kept glancing at the manuscript to see what progress I was making. He begged me not to hesitate to cross out and rewrite. I wanted to make my remarks on a separate sheet of paper, but he told me to work right on the text. He was very cordial and kind. He spoke a great deal, argued a great deal, and kept giving off blinding flashes of wit."

On November 1 Tsurikov came to Yasnaya Polyana again and, as he says in his diary, corrected the whole tenth chapter of Part I of *Resurrection.* The next morning he read his changes to Lev Nikolayevich. Tolstoi approved of them and gave the text over to be copied by hand, then to be typed, after which the chapter went to press.

I. L. Tolstoi

Ilya Lvovich Tolstoi (1866-1933):
the writer's second son

MY RECOLLECTIONS

IMPRESSIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

When I was six I remember papa teaching the village children.

They studied in the house where Alexei Stepanych (our steward) lived, and sometimes downstairs in our own house.

The village children came to us, ever so many of them. Whenever they came there was a smell of sheepskin in the hall. Papa and Sergei and Tanya and Uncle Kostya taught them. It was very gay and noisy during the lessons.

The children were quite free to do as they pleased; they sat wherever they wanted to and moved from place to place. They answered questions not one by one, but in unison, interrupting each other and making a common effort to recall what they had read. When one pupil left out something, another immediately jumped up to supply it, then a third, and so on until the story or answer was complete.

Papa was delighted by the imagery and originality of the children's speech.

He never demanded that they repeat literally the expressions used in books and greatly encouraged everything that was individual and "one's own."

I remember his stopping a boy who was making a dash to the next room.

"Where are you going?"

"To bite off a piece of chalk."

"Ah, run along then, run along." And when the boy was gone he turned aside and said: "It's not for us to teach them; we must learn from them. Would any of us have used that expression? He did not say 'fetch' or 'break off,' but 'bite off' a piece, because that is exactly what they do: they bite off a piece of chalk from the large piece instead of breaking it off."

PAPA

Father never fondled me. That does not mean he did not love me. On the contrary, I know that he did love me, and there were periods when we were very close. But he never expressed his love by fondling his children and always seemed to be ashamed of such outward signs of affection. When we were children, demonstrations of affection were called "calves' licking."

Father, as I remember him before he began to write *Anna Karenina*, looked very much as he does in Kramskoi's portrait of him. At that time he wore a short beard, his dark hair curled slightly at the ends, and his movements were quick and sure. He was very strong and agile. He began to teach us gymnastics in childhood, as well as swimming, ice-skating and horseback riding. He displayed his usual severity in these things. "I can't" or "I'm tired" fell on deaf ears.

"Swim!" and he pushed me into the deep part of the river, watching to see that I did not drown, but not helping me, and encouraging and praising me when, half-drowned and with eyes starting out of my head with fright, I reached shore.

Or on horseback. Father broke into a trot. I tried to keep up with him. I felt myself losing balance. With every step I slipped still further out of the saddle. I felt all was up with me. Better to have it over with. A few more convulsive but ineffective attempts to save myself, and I was on the ground.

Father stopped.

"Hurt yourself?"

"No," I tried to say in a steady voice.

"Then climb up again."

And off he went at the same trot, for all the world as if nothing had happened.

MY STUDIES AND GAMES

Papa taught me arithmetic, Latin and Greek. His teaching was excellent: lucid and interesting. But just as on horseback, he went at a trot all the time and one had to keep up with him whatever it cost. I probably owe it to the good start he gave me that, although I was a poor student on the whole, I always got on well in mathematics and liked it.

When I was five I was presented with a large china cup and saucer. On seeing the cup standing on my table, I seized it . . . with both hands and ran off to show it to the others.

As I ran out of the dining-room into the drawing-room, my foot caught on the door-sill, I fell, and nothing was left of my cup but the bits.

Of course I began to wail at the top of my lungs and pretend that I was much more badly hurt than was really the case. Mama hurried to my side to comfort me and make me see that my own carelessness was to blame. That made me angry and I began to shout that it was not I who was to blame, but the horrid builder who had put a high sill in the doorway, and that if it hadn't been for him I would never have fallen down.

Papa heard me and began to laugh. "So the builder's to blame, is he? The builder's to blame!"

After that the saying "the builder's to blame" became current in our family, especially with papa, who used it whenever anyone tried to foist blame on to somebody else.

Papa had many sayings like that, all borrowed from life.

Another one of them was "for Prokhor." I was taught to play the piano in childhood. Being frightfully lazy, I would thump at the piano in any old way for an hour or so just to get it over and done with.

Then one day papa suddenly heard grand roulades coming from the dining-room. He glanced in to see who was playing, unable to believe it could be me. It *was* me, but he also saw our carpenter, Prokhor, at the window, installing the winter frames. He instantly guessed why I had been putting on such a grand show: I had been playing "for Prokhor."

"Prokhor" tracked my steps through life, for father was constantly reproaching me for the fault his name symbolized.

IMPRESSIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

Papa was the only person who really understood me and Tanya, and even he erred at times. He had a store of diversions he himself had invented, some of which we adopted. He had a "Numidian horse," for instance.

When tiresome visitors had just gone and we all sat subdued in the dining-room, papa would suddenly jump up, raise one arm and gallop quickly round the table. We would all follow suit, kicking up our heels and waving our arms as he did. After we had done several turns round the room we felt much better and resumed our seats in an entirely different mood. His "Numidian horse" had a salubrious effect on many occasions.

At this period of our childhood we were infatuated with Jules Verne.

Papa brought us his books from Moscow, and every evening we gathered and he read aloud to us from *Captain Grant's Children, Eighty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, Journey to the Moon, Three Russians and Three Englishmen* and, finally, *Around the World in Eighty Days.*

The last of these was not illustrated, whereupon papa undertook to illustrate it himself.

Every day he would make pen and ink sketches for the evening, and we much preferred his illustrations to those in the other books.

I can still remember one of them depicting a strange Buddhist goddess with several heads entwined by snakes, fantastic and frightening.

We looked forward to the evening impatiently, and when, during the reading, he would come to a place he had illustrated and pause to pull his drawing out from under the book, we would all lean and crawl over the table to see it.

On finishing Jules Verne we began Dumas' *The Three Musketeers* (with M. Nief who had become our French tutor). Papa himself crossed out the places that were not fit for children.

ON THE WAY TO THE POOL

We were going for a bathe.

Papa turned to me and said:

"I'm very satisfied with myself today, Ilya. For three days I've been grappling with her; I couldn't for the life of me make her go into the house. I just couldn't, and that was all. But today I recalled that every entrance hall has a mirror in it, and every woman wears a hat. As soon as I remembered that, she began to do exactly what I wanted her to. You'd say a hat was a little thing, but it seems the whole problem lay in that hat."

As I recall his words after all these years, I realize that father was speaking to me of the scene in *Anna Karenina* in which Anna comes back to see her son.

Although in the final version of the novel this scene contains nothing about a hat or a mirror (only a heavy black veil is mentioned), it is my belief that in its original form father had Anna go to the mirror to set her hat right.

I remember with what animation father told me all that, and now it seems strange that he should have shared such subtle creative problems with a seven-year-old boy who could hardly have shared his feelings at the time.

But such things happened more than once. On another occasion he gave a very interesting explanation of what a writer needs for his work.

"You can't imagine how important the mood is," he said. "Sometimes you get up in the morning feeling fresh and energetic, your head is clear, and you begin to write. Everything sounds clever and logical. But when you read it over the next morning it all has to be crossed out because, while it is good enough in its way, the main thing is lacking. There is no imagination, no talent; it hasn't got that 'something' without which mind alone isn't worth a straw. Another time you get up sleepy and with your nerves on edge. Well, you tell yourself, today I'll write better. And you do in fact write beautifully, with plenty of imagery and imagination. You look it over, and again it's no good, because it is stupid. There is colour, but no mind. A thing only turns out well when mind and imagination are balanced. As soon as one outweighs the other, all is lost. You may as well throw the work away and begin anew."

GARSHIN

My memories of Vsevolod Mikhailovich Garshin go back to childhood. He visited Yasnaya Polyana early in the spring of 1880.

We were sitting at the large table in the dining-room finishing our dinner. As Sergei Petrovich, the butler, served the last dish he told father there was a "man" waiting for him downstairs.

"What does he want?" asked papa.

"He would not say. He asked to see you."

"Very well, I'll be right down."

Leaving his cake unfinished, papa got up and went downstairs. We children also jumped up and ran after him.

There was a young man standing in the hall. He was poorly dressed and still in his coat.

"What can I do for you?" asked papa after greeting him.

"The first thing I would like is a glass of vodka and the tail of a herring," said the man, looking boldly into papa's eyes and giving him a radiant, innocent smile.

For a moment papa was taken aback by so unexpected an answer. What an odd thing to say! The man was sober and looked like a decent fellow—an intellectual, judging by appearances. What a strange way to introduce oneself!

Papa threw him another of his piercing glances, met the man's eyes and grinned. Garshin grinned too, like a little boy who has just cracked a joke and looks at his mother to see if she likes it.

Father liked it.

Not the joke, of course, but the eyes of the little boy, so bright, and radiant and full of thought.

There was so much honesty and spirituality in his glance, and at the same time so much pure and childlike goodness, that it was impossible on meeting him not to want to know him better and show him kindness.

That was evidently what Lev Nikolayevich felt.

He told the butler to bring vodka and a snack, opened the door into his study and asked Garshin to take off his coat and come in.

"You must be frozen," he said as he studied his guest more closely.

"I don't know. Perhaps I am, rather. I had a long ride."

After downing his glass of vodka and appeasing his hunger, Garshin mentioned his name and said he "wrote a little."

"What have you written?"

"'Four Days' is the name of a story of mine that was published in the *Otechestvenniye Zapiski.* I don't suppose you noticed it."

"Indeed I did, I remember it well. So you are the author? It's a splendid story. Oh, yes, I noticed it—very much so. That means you have been in the war?"

"Yes, from start to finish."

"I can imagine how much you saw. Tell me about it. I'm greatly interested."

Father asked Garshin in detail about what he had seen and experienced.

Lev Tolstoi in his study at Yasnaya Polyana, summer of 1908

Lev Tolstoi with peasant children at Yasnaya Polyana, 1909

They were sitting on the leather sofa and we children formed a ring around them. Unfortunately I do not remember all that was said and will not undertake to reproduce their talk. All I remember is that it was extremely interesting.

Neither do I remember whether Garshin spent the night at Yasnaya or left that same day.

THE END OF THE SEVENTIES

In the summer of 1879, Shchegolenok, an elocutionist who recited Russian epic poetry, visited us at Yasnaya Polyana. We called him by his patronymic—Petrovich.

His manner of reciting was like the chanting of blind beggars, but without the beggars' unpleasant nasal tone, which always fell gratingly on my ears.

For some reason I remember him sitting on the stone steps of our verandah opposite father's study.

Father used to listen to him with great attention and make him recite something new every day. Petrovich easily complied, for his stock was inexhaustible.

From his stories father later borrowed subjects for his own folk tales ("What Men Live By" and "The Three Old Gaffers").

The old Ekaterininskaya Tract, or, as it was more often called, the Moscow-Kiev *Muravka*, passed near the stone gates of the Yasnaya Polyana estate. In olden times it was one of the main Russian communication arteries. Later it was replaced by a stone highway that ran parallel with it in some places, diverged in others. The highway is one verst from Yasnaya, almost at the horizon, but it can be seen from the windows of the large dining-room. Along this highway, and sometimes along the old tract too, wayfarers and religious pilgrims still wended their way, as in days gone by. When he finished working, that is, at about four in the afternoon, father usually went for a walk or a ride on horseback. At an earlier period of his life he was fond of bathing in our pool or hunting in the forest, but later he preferred walking out to the highway, where he met and talked with the wayfarers and pilgrims, often discovering people of uncommon gifts among them.

They would reveal to him once again the age-old wisdom of the common folk, which has found such simple and vivid expression in their sayings and proverbs.

These walks along the highway soon became more than a form of recreation; they became a need.

"I'm going for a stroll along the Nevsky Prospekt," he would say jokingly on setting out.

"I met an amazing old man and walked all the way to Tula with him," he once said on returning at about ten o'clock in the evening, having missed his dinner.

His diary of that period is sprinkled with proverbs and phrases revealing the wisdom of the simple folk, which he garnered during his walks. Many of his later folk tales were inspired by his friends of "Nevsky Prospekt." And he, the great writer Lev Tolstoi, famous, rich and educated, more than once seriously envied those beggars, who, though ragged and often hungry, were happy and at peace with the world.

WE MOVE TO MOSCOW. THE CENSUS

In the autumn of 1881 our whole family moved to Moscow. In the spring of that year I passed my examinations in Tula and was to enter a state gymnasium.

Papa called on the director of one of Moscow's state gymnasiums to see to my enrolment, but an unexpected difficulty cropped up: the school demanded from any boy applying for admission that he submit, among other papers, a guarantee of good behaviour signed by his father. My father refused to sign such a paper, and in consequence I had to go to the Polivanov private gymnasium, where I was accepted solely on the basis of an examination, without unnecessary formalities.

"How can I guarantee the behaviour of anybody else, even my own son?" he asked indignantly. "I told the director it was stupid to demand such a thing of parents and he agreed, but in the end it turned out he could not accept the boy without it."

In January 1882 father participated in the 3-day Moscow census.

He chose the poorest section of Moscow, near the Smolensky Market, including Protochny Street, in which were notorious doss-houses , including the Rzhanov house.

I remember students coming to see him and his holding long talks with them behind closed doors. I also remember his taking me with him to see a doss-house.

It was evening when we walked through the dirt and stench of the miserable lodgings and father asked every lodger what he lived by, how he had been reduced to his present straits, how much he paid for his lodgings and what kind of food he ate.

In the common room for those who could not pay at all, things were even worse. One needed to ask no questions there: all its inmates were absolute derelicts. It was frightening and horrifying to see so much poverty and filth.

One glance at father's face was enough to tell me he felt just as I did, but it wore, in addition, an expression of such commiseration and pain that I shall never forget it.

I felt that, like me, he wanted to run away, but I also felt that he could not do so because there was no place to run to; wherever he went, the impression of what he had seen would pursue and torture him just the same, perhaps even more.

That was exactly how it was.

PHYSICAL LABOUR

My father always enjoyed physical labour because it meant healthful and useful exercise, and also close contact with nature.

Aside from the vast moral and educational significance he attributed to physical labour, he simply enjoyed it. He enjoyed the very process, and made a detailed study of it. Often it served, I think, as a safety valve, enabling him to live through moments of great strain. I recall that during our first winter in Moscow he went beyond the Moscow River to the Vorobyovy Hills to saw wood with the muzhiks there. He came home tired, sweating, and full of fresh impressions of the healthy life of labour, and at the dinner table he told us how those people worked, the size of the teams of horses, and what the men earned. He always ended by comparing their life of toil and their modest requirements with our aristocratic life of luxury and leisure.

Another episode comes to mind connected with the poet Yakov Petrovich Polonsky—my only memory of him. One evening we were seated at the joiner's bench hard at work. Sergei Petrovich, the butler, came in to announce that a gentleman by the name of Potogonsky was asking for the count.

"Potogonsky? I don't know anybody of that name. Ask him up," said father.

At least five minutes must have passed, for we had already forgotten about Potogonsky, when suddenly we heard strange thumpings in the corridor.

Presently the door opened and a tall grey-haired old man on crutches came in.

Father peered into the face of his visitor and recognized him in a flash. He jumped up and kissed him.

"Gracious, so it's you, Yakov Petrovich! Pray forgive me for making you climb all those stairs! If I had known I would have come down to you, but Sergei said your name was 'Potogonsky.' How was I to know it was you?! Would you like some refreshments?"

"Well, if my name is 'Potogonsky,'* let me live up to it by giving me a glass of hot tea," he said puffing and dropped in exhaustion on the sofa.

FATHER AS AN EDUCATOR

Except for the few lessons to develop our minds, which papa took upon himself, he attached the greatest importance to our physical development, to gymnastics and all kinds of exercises to inculcate courage and initiative.

For a time he had us gather every day in the lane where the gymnastic apparatuses were installed, and we took turns trying to do the difficult exercises he assigned us on the parallel bars, rings and trapeze.

When we were to go walking or riding, papa never waited for anyone who was late, whatever the reason. If I, trying to overtake him, began to cry, he would say jeeringly: "Wait for me! Wait for me!" I would roar even louder and grow angry, but I would be sure to catch up.

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* *Potogonny*—the Russian for sudorific.

The word "molly-coddle" was a dreadful epithet for us: nothing could be more insulting than for papa to call any one of us a "molly-coddle."

I remember the time Grandma Pelageya Ilyinishna, while adjusting the lamp, picked up the hot chimney in her bare fingers. She burned them so badly that blisters appeared, but she did not drop the chimney until she had put it safely on the table. Papa saw this, and later, when he wanted to reproach one of us with lack of spirit, he would hold her up to us as an example.

"That was endurance for you! Grannie had every right to drop the chimney on the floor; a chimney only costs five kopeks and she earns five times as much every day, if only by her knitting—but she did nothing of the sort. She burnt herself, but held on. You would have dropped it. And so would I, no doubt," he said, in appreciation of her courage.

Papa hardly ever *made* us do anything; it always turned out that we were doing exactly what he wanted us to, but seemingly on our own initiative.

His remarkable gift as a teacher lay in the fact that one could no more conceal anything from him than from one's own conscience. He knew everything, and to deceive him would have been like deceiving one's own self. It would have been hard to do such a thing, and there would have been no advantage in it.

HELP FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE FAMINE

I helped my father in 1898, when he went to the assistance of the starving in the Chern and Mtsensk uyezds.

After the crop failures of the two preceding years, it was apparent by the onset of winter that another famine was due in our parts, and that the people would be in need of help.

I appealed to my father.

By spring he had collected money, and early in April he joined me in person.

I must say that father was thrifty by nature and exceedingly cautious in dispensing charity—almost stingy, if you like. That is easily understood when one considers the boundless trust the donors put in him and the great responsibility to them he must have felt. And so before he did anything, he had to convince himself personally of the urgency of such help.

The day after he arrived we harnessed a pair of horses and set out. We rode straight across the fields, just as we had twenty years before, when, with our borzoi pack, we had set out for the hunt.

It made no difference to me which direction we took as all the surrounding villages seemed to be in the same dire straits; but for old times' sake father wanted to see Spasskoye-Lutovinovo, nine versts from my place, where he had not been since the days of Turgenev.

On the way, as I remember, he told me about Turgenev's mother, famed in the district as a woman of extraordinary intelligence and energy, but of unbridled passions. I do not know whether he ever saw her himself or merely repeated stories he had heard from others.

As we drove through Turgenev's park, he touched briefly on his old arguments with him as to whose park was better, his at Spasskoye or ours at Yasnaya Polyana.

"And what would you say now?" I asked.

"Yasnaya Polyana is really better, though this one is also fine—very fine."

In the village we spoke to the Elder, and went into two or three houses. There were no signs of famine.

The peasants, having received their full allotment of good land and having opportunities to earn money by doing odd jobs, were getting on quite satisfactorily.

True, some of the farms were poor, but the critical condition called famine, whose telltale signs can immediately be read, was not to be seen.

I even remember how my father reproached me lightly with having sounded the alarm without sufficient cause, and how awkward and shamefaced I felt.

Father asked every peasant he met whether he remembered Turgenev, and greedily drank in everything he was told. Some of the old men remembered him well and spoke of him with great love.

From Spasskoye we continued on our way. When we had gone two versts we came upon the small village of Pogibelka, lost among vast fields. We stopped there.

In that village the peasants had been allotted "beggars' " plots, which were hard to work and inconveniently situated, and by spring the inhabitants had reached such a pass that there remained only one cow and two horses for eight farmsteads. The rest of the livestock had been sold, young and old were living by begging.

In the next village, Bolshaya Gubaryovka, we found the same situation. Further on, things were even worse.

We decided to open dining-rooms without further delay. The work got under way quickly.

The most difficult task, that of determining the number to be fed from each peasant family, was done mostly by father himself. That took him from village to village and kept him busy all day long and often far into the night. The task of purchasing and distributing products devolved upon my wife. Helpers appeared. Within a week we had twelve dining-rooms functioning in the Mtsensk Uyezd, and an equal number in the Chern Uyezd.

As our resources did not allow of our feeding all the people, we admitted mostly children, the old and the sick to our dining-rooms. I remember how glad father was if he arrived in a village when dinner was being served, and how moved he was by the awe with which people regarded food.

Unfortunately we had some trouble with the authorities.

It all began when two young ladies who had arrived from Moscow to take charge of one of our large dining-rooms were put out bodily, and there were threats of closing it down. Then the local police chief called on me and asked to be shown my permit to open dining-rooms. I tried to convince him that the law could not forbid charity, but in vain.

My father came into the room as we were talking, and an amicable conversation ensued between him and the police chief, in the course of which one side argued that there could not be a ban on feeding people, and the other begged his opponent to try to understand the position of a man who is not his own master and has to obey orders from above.

"What would you have me do, your grace?"

"It's very simple. Don't take a job where you can be forced to act against the dictates of your conscience."

To save our dining-rooms I had to make a trip to the governors of the Orel and Tula gubernias, and finally send the Minister of Home Affairs a telegram asking him to remove the obstacles being placed in the way of our private philanthropic work, which was not prohibited by law.

In that way we saved the dining-rooms already in existence, but were not allowed to open any more.

FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES

A. A. Fet

Afanasy Afanasyevich Fet (1821-91): famous Russian poet, close friend of Tolstoi's

REMINISCENCES

On January 15 Gromeka wrote:

"I make haste to inform you, as you requested, dear Afanasy Afanasyevich, that I am going bear-hunting one of these days, perhaps on the 18th or the 20th. Tell Tolstoi that if it pleases him to join our hunt I will expect him at Volochok about the 18th or 19th, and that he is to go straight to my place. . . ."

In confirmation of the invitation Ostashkov, a famous leader in bear hunts, went to Tolstoi's chambers. Whenever he put in an appearance among hunters it was as if a red-hot iron had been plunged into water: everything seethed and boiled. As each bear hunter is supposed to take two guns, Count Lev Nikolayevich asked me for my German double-barrel shot gun. On the appointed day Lev Nikolayevich and Nikolai Nikolayevich set out for the Nikolayevsky Station. The following is a conscientious account of what I heard from Lev Nikolayevich himself and from those who accompanied him on the hunt.

When the hunters, each with two loaded guns, had taken up their positions in a clearing in the forest reached by passages cut in chessboard pattern, they were advised to stamp down the snow about them in as wide a radius as possible so as to give themselves the greatest possible freedom of movement. Lev Nikolayevich, standing at his post almost up to the belt in snow, declared there was no point in stamping it down as the object was to shoot the bear and not engage in hand-to-hand combat with it. The count propped my loaded gun against a tree-trunk so that he could reach for it after he had fired his own. The huge bear which Ostashkov had lured out of its cave was not long in appearing. It made for the valley down a passage that came out near the man stationed to the right of Lev Nikolayevich, with the result that the count could not see it approaching. The beast, probably because it had caught the scent of the huntsman, suddenly turned into a cross passage and made straight for Tolstoi. Calmly taking aim, he pulled the trigger but must have missed. In a cloud of smoke he saw a huge mass moving on him. He fired at it point-blank, the bullet entered the bear's mouth and got caught between its teeth. The deep snow prevented the count from jumping aside, and before he could reach for my gun he was felled by a fierce blow on the chest. The bear jumped over him on the run.

"This is the end," the count told himself. "I missed the first time and will not have a chance to fire a second." But at that moment he was aware of something dark over his head: the bear had come back to crack open his skull with its teeth. Lying in the snow underneath the beast, as helpless as if his hands were tied, Tolstoi could offer only passive resistance, pulling his head down as far as he could between his shoulders and thrusting his shaggy fur cap into the bear's jaws. Perhaps it was because of these instinctive passes that the animal, despite repeated attempts, was able to inflict only one wound. It sank its upper teeth into Tolstoi's cheek, under his left eye, and with its lower teeth tore the skin off the left side of his forehead. Just then Ostashkov came running up with a switch in his hand, threw out his arms and shouted: "Where to? Where to?" The shout made the bear turn and run for its life. As I remember, it was encircled and shot the next day.

When Tolstoi rose from the ground with the skin hanging from his face (the wound was immediately bandaged), his first words were: "What will Fet say to this?"

V. S. Morozov

Vasily Stepanovich Morozov (1848-1912): a peasant from the village of Yasnaya Polyana, Tolstoi's favourite pupil, the Fedka of Tolstoi's article "The Yasnaya Polyana School in November and December"

RECOLLECTIONS OF A PUPIL OF THE YASNAYA POLYANA SCHOOL

Early in the fall of 1859 the news went round Yasnaya Polyana that Lev Nikolayevich was going to open a school in the village and that all children who wanted to study could attend it as there would be no charge. I can still remember the excitement the announcement caused. People began to gather in groups to discuss the matter and air their views.

How? Why? Was there no trick behind it? Certainly it was no small undertaking to start a free school—why, there would be fifty children or more asking to be admitted.

We were to assemble at Tolstoi's house on Tuesday, that being an easy day. Scarcely had we all arrived when the count, our future teacher, appeared on the porch. Caps came off and everybody bowed low.

"Good day. Have you brought your children?" Lev Nikolayevich asked the parents.

"Yes, your grace," replied the grown-ups, and bowed again.

Lev Tolstoi and Ilya Mechnikov, May 1909

Lev Tolstoi chats with Alexander Goldenweiser (second on right)

"Good, I'm glad to hear it." He surveyed the crowd with a smile on his face. Quickly his eyes picked out the little ones who were hiding behind their fathers and mothers. He pushed through to the middle of the crowd.

"So you want to study?" he asked the first little boy he came upon.

"Yes."

"What's your name?"

"Danilka."

"And your surname?"

"Kozlov."

"And now you're going to study?"

He turned to each boy in turn: "What's your name?"

"Ignatka Makarov."

"And yours?"

"Taraska Fokanov."

Turning round, Lev Nikolayevich noticed my sister.

"Hullo! Have you come to study too? Would you like to?" To the grown-ups: "Let the girls come too. We're all going to study."

"No, I haven't come to study, I just..." my sister brought out shyly, then burst into tears.

It was my turn.

"And you—do you want to study?"

"Yes," I said timidly, shaking like an aspen leaf.

"What's your name?"

"Vaska."

"Don't you know your surname?" he asked, and it seemed to me he disapproved and looked upon me as a ragamuffin.

"Of course I do."

"What is it?"

"Morozov."

"Well, I'll remember you, Vaska Morozov," and he smiled. His face looked approving now, I thought. I seemed to have seen him somewhere before.

"Come on, Morozov, Makarov, Kozlov, all of you—follow me! The rest of you may go home, with God's blessing. I want to show my future scholars the school. Send more children. And let the little girls come, too. We're all going to study."

One week slipped by in study, then another, then a whole month. Autumn was gone before we knew it, and it was winter. We felt perfectly at home in the school and had become utterly attached to Lev Nikolayevich. One day he said to us: "Don't call me 'your grace.' My name is Lev Nikolayevich and that is what you must call me." And so we never used that title in addressing him again.

In three months' time we were deep in our studies. By that time we could read with facility and the number of scholars had grown from twenty-two to seventy.

All seventy of us would swoop down on Tolstoi, one with a question, another with a lesson book to show.

"Lev Nikolayevich, is this right?"

He would look at the book.

"Yes, it's right, only you've left something out here. Otherwise it's fine. Don't hurry so."

"What about mine—how do I write?" and another copy-book would be thrust under his nose, and then another, until the whole group was clamouring for his attention.

He would examine the books seriously and say a few kind words of approval sprinkled with remarks like:

"You'll have to rewrite that. You've left out too much."

In another room, that of the third form, a mistake was made. Someone, repeating the syllable "dra," omitted the "r."

"No, no, that's wrong!" Lev Nikolayevich called out sharply, dropping the copy-book he was examining. "No, no, that will never do!" And he hurried to the third form, enunciating the syllable on the way:

"D-r-a. What sound does that make?"

We answered in unison:

"Dra."

His enthusiasm was catching, and our spirits rose with every new day. At noon, lunch was served. That was also the time for games and fun.

"How about a bite to eat and a whiff of fresh air?" Lev Nikolayevich would ask. "I'd like it too. Well, let's see who can get outside the fastest."

And all of us would rush, a shouting, squealing horde, down the stairs at his heels. He took four steps at a time and easily outdistanced us. But we were never far behind.

"I'll be back in a jiffy," he'd say on reaching the wing of the next building, which was the house he lived in.

We would scatter down all the garden paths. Soon he would reappear. Followed more games, noise, shouting, running, throwing one another down in the snow and pelting one another with snowballs.

"Come on, everybody, at me! Who can knock me down?"

We surrounded Lev Nikolayevich, clutched at him from before and behind, tried to trip him, threw snowballs at him, sprang upon him, climbed up his back, in a word, did everything possible to throw him, but in vain. His resistance was stronger than our attack and he carried us on his back like a strong ox. At last he dropped down exhausted, or, oftener than not—in mock surrender. Our glee defies description. We began to bury him in snow and fall on him in a heap, shouting, "Pile on, pile on!"

The hours sped by like minutes. When life is so gay, it flies by unnoticed.

In such a happy atmosphere we made rapid strides in our studies and became very close to Lev Nikolayevich. We missed him when he was away, and he missed us. We were inseparable, parting only late at night. In the daytime we were together in school, in the evening we played together and sat on his verandah until midnight.

I remember one of those evenings in particular. It was a holiday, just which one I do not remember, but the time was at the end of August because the harvest was being gathered in. All of the older boys were there. We talked and joked and whiled the time away, but occasionally the conversation turned to serious things and called for all the attention and thought we could give it.

Lev Nikolayevich began telling us about the war and the sights he had seen: the killed, the wounded, the sick; the doctor sawing off a leg, amputating an arm, removing an injured eye. Hardly a lad among us could help shuddering at the horror of his descriptions.

"Now let me tell you what I have just decided," Lev Nikolayevich said, suddenly changing the subject. "Would you like to hear?"

"Yes, tell us, tell us," we cried in unison.

"This is what I have decided," began Lev Nikolayevich. "I am going to give up my land and my aristocratic way of life and become a peasant, build myself a hut at the edge of the village, marry a country woman, and work as you do—mowing, ploughing, and all the rest."

"Make yourself a laughing-stock by becoming a hired hand?" scoffed Ignat.

"Why a hired hand? I will work for myself and my family on my own farm."

"In that case, what are you going to do with your property?" we asked.

"What property? The estate? We'll divide it up. It will be yours and mine; we'll own it in common, as equals."

"And what if people laugh at you, and say: 'There goes Tolstoi, who lost everything he had; once he was our master, but he went bankrupt and now he is so poor he has to work himself.' Won't you feel ashamed?" we asked.

Lev Nikolayevich replied as gravely and thoughtfully as if we had been grown-ups:

"What do you mean 'ashamed'? Is it anything to be ashamed of to work for oneself? Have your fathers ever told you they were ashamed to work? They have not. What is there to be ashamed of in a man's feeding himself and his family by the sweat of his brow? If anybody laughs at me, it ought to be for the opposite reason. Here's what I say: there's nothing to laugh at in a man's working, but there is a great deal of shame and disgrace in his not working and yet living better than others. That is what I am ashamed of. I eat, drink, ride horseback, play the piano, and still I feel bored. I say to myself: 'You're a do-nothing.' "

Lev Nikolayevich gazed a while at Ignat, then glanced at me and the others and said:

"Well, Ignat, what is the verdict?"

For us, his question was new, puzzling, unheard-of; talkative as Ignat usually was, he could find nothing to say. We were all silent, unable to give credence to Lev Nikolayevich's latest fancy. Each of us tried to discover whether Lev Nikolayevich was serious or joking. As if one could turn a nobleman into a muzhik!

At last we found our tongues again and began to discuss the knotty problem of how to marry Lev Nikolayevich off and get him started in his new life, how to find him a good wife who would not be afraid to work; we said that if none presented herself in our village, we would look for one in the villages of Kaznacheyevka or Baburino. We quoted the folk saying that asserts it is easier to get married than to stay married—a wife can't be thrown out like an old shoe! Thus we instructed him in all the fine points of the problem.

He sat there smiling, asking some of us to repeat our remarks and jotting them down.

Lev Nikolayevich had invited me to go with him on a trip. He was going to the Samara Gubernia for a kumiss cure.

He asked my friend, Chernov, another of his pupils, to go too.

From Kazan we went to Samara, and from Samara another one hundred and thirty versts by horse and cart, a very long and wearisome journey. But at last we arrived. We found ourselves in the midst of the steppe, without a village, a copse, or even a clump of bushes in sight; nothing but rude felt *yurtas*. We stopped before one of them, which was to be our home throughout our stay.

The *yurta* was not small; there was plenty of room for the four of us. Soon two large old carpets and some felt mats were brought in. The carpets were spread over the earthen floor, the mats were used for Lev Nikolayevich's bed. Our home began to look attractive inside and out. It was every bit as large as a good-sized hut, but round in shape, made of felt stretched over a wooden frame. Ours was one of many *yurtas* standing in two rows facing each other.

The first two weeks after our arrival among the Bashkirs passed quickly. We found them good company, and soon felt at home with them and they with us. All the Bashkirs, young and old, adored Lev Nikolayevich who had a way with people: with the old men he talked seriously about religion, God, Allah; with the younger men he joked and played games till the air rang with their laughter. He had a hand in everything. Every person he met loved him for some reason of his own. And so it was, day after day, throughout our visit.

Soon all the Bashkirs were on such good terms with Tolstoi that no one passed him without a smile of pleasure and a bow. Even the little four- and five-year-olds nodded and smiled and called out:

"Knyas Tul!" ("Prince of Tula!")

V. A. Gilyarovsky

Vladimir Alexeyevich Gilyarovsky
(1855-1935): Russian writer

MEN OF STAROGLADOVSKAYA

It was my good fortune to come upon a man who remembered Lev Nikolayevich when the latter lived in the Cossack village of Starogladovskaya.

It was he who told me the stories I repeat here faithfully. He was the only one able to tell me anything about the life of Lev Nikolayevich at a time when he aroused no more interest or attention than any other young officer stationed in a village.

In a letter to Sergei Nikolayevich Tolstoi, dated November 23, 1853, Lev Nikolayevich, among other things, said that his brother Nikolai had taken away a pack of hunting dogs with him when he left the village. He wrote:

"Yepishka and I often call him a 'hawg' for that."

That Yepishka, Lev Nikolayevich's bosom friend, a dashing Cossack of the "old school," was the Yeroshka who is vividly described in the story *The Cossacks*. The old man, who remembered Lev Nikolayevich when they were both young, also knew Yepishka and told me a great deal about him.

I recorded every detail of my interview with that old man in Yessentuki in 1910, and reprint it here just as I jotted it down when it was still fresh in my mind.

Yessentuki, June 19

Such meetings are rare. The officer wearing a St. George Cross and a Caucasian Military Cross had long roused my curiosity. We struck up a conversation. He proved to be a Greben Cossack, by name Kirill Grigoryevich Sinyukhayev, a native of the Cossack village of Starogladovskaya. I knew that to be the real name of the village of Novomlinskaya which Tolstoi describes in his *Cossacks*.

I also knew that some years before, Lev Nikolayevich had been visited by a Greben Cossack officer. But he had been a young man, and my interlocutor was the same age as Lev Nikolayevich—that is, well over seventy. Still, he was a hearty and energetic old man, who looked much younger than his years.

I was delighted by his appearance. His hair was as white as the snow on a mountain peak; he himself—as thin and wiry as a reed. He began telling me what he remembered about Lev Nikolayevich.

"Indeed I do remember him. I remember him very well. In 1845 Ukrainian Old Believers arrived at our village and built it up until it was half its size again. Well, when Tolstoi came, he took lodgings first in the new part, then moved to the old, where we lived. The 20th Artillery Brigade was stationed there, and his brother was an officer in it. But he didn't live with his brother. He lived separately, in the house of the Cossack Sekhin. There are a great many Sinyukhayevs and Sekhins in our village, all related to one another. Tolstoi—we all called him Tolstov—roomed with a rich Sekhin, and next door lived a brother of Sekhin's and friend of Tolstoi's, Uncle Yepishka, a hunter and horseman whose equal is not to be found these days. But then, he had few rivals in the old days either. Uncle

Yepishka was a grand Cossack. He lived alone with his dogs and hawks and all sorts of trained animals, and gave them all a home in his hut. Everybody loved and respected him—not only the Cossacks, but the Chechens and the Nogais too. He often went off to their *auls*,* where he was received as an honoured guest. He said the same thing to everybody: 'We all live but to die. People are not beasts, so there's no call for them to fly at each other's throats. Now a beast, you just kill it.' That was how he lived, either hunting or playing his balalaika. On holidays he dressed himself up in his red silk *beshmet* (presented to him by the hostile Princes Girei), soft leather slippers and leggings embroidered in silver. His tall fur cap was of wolf or fox and nobody else had one to compare with it. At such times he always carried a balalaika, never a gun. He was as tall as a tower and strong as an ox. That's how I remember him and he was little short of seventy then. After he'd drunk half a bucket of *chikhir*, off he'd go, singing and dancing. My, how he danced! 'Dance some more, Uncle Yepishka,' the company would beg. 'Well and good, if you give me a jug of *chikhir* first.' They'd bring the wine, he'd pour it down—and again he'd be singing and dancing and playing that balalaika of his. But that was only on holidays. On week-days Yepishka never said a word to a soul. He'd wear his old *beshmet*, goatskin breeches, buffalo-skin boots, wolfskin cap, and throw a skin over his shoulders. The gun in his hands had a butt inlaid with gold. He never missed his mark with that gun. At that time powder and lead were expensive; people didn't hold rifle contests, but neither did they ever miss their mark."

At that moment a huge, broad-shouldered Kuban Cossack passed by.

"Yepishka was a lot taller and broader than him," said my interlocutor, pointing to the Cossack. That gave me an idea of what a giant of a man Lev Nikolayevich's friend must have been.

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* *Aul*—a native settlement.

"He never did anything but hunt. He also had a St. George Cross, but he never put it on—only wore a greasy stripe on his old *beshmet*, not to show off, but for his own satisfaction. He didn't like to talk about his exploits, but the old men told wonderful tales about him, about what a great *djigit* he was. Later he refused to have anything more to do with the army, nobody knew why.

"He was a good-natured, easy-going fellow. Never hurt anybody by a harsh word or deed; the worst he'd do was call a person a 'hawg.' He was friendly and used the familiar 'thou' with everybody. He never sought the favour of others, yet was loved by all. The whole village would gather when he told stories or sang. His voice was loud and ringing. He didn't attend village meetings or take any part in village affairs. 'I live by myself. I'm a lone wolf,' he'd say. All he knew was his gun, the hunt, setting his traps, drinking and making merry. The only exception he made was for Tolstoi. He loved Tolstoi. Looked on him as a *kunak*, or blood brother; Tolstoi was the only one he ever took hunting with him. There he'd be outside his hut, cooking porridge in a pot on stones over the fire, and there'd be Tolstoi, sitting beside him, the two of them cooking porridge and eating it. Or back from the hunt he'd come with Tolstoi at his side, both hung with game, and their bags full too; their guns and *shataly** slung over their shoulders. He walked lightly, for all that he must have weighed ten poods. As I remember, Uncle Yepishka never rode a horse, always went on foot. He could speak the Kumyk and Nogai languages and had been the guest of the hostile Princes Girei. Everybody loved him, and even the girls did not hide their faces behind veils in his presence. The mountaineers hunted with falcons, and Uncle Yepishka trained falcons and sold them at a good price."

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* *Shataly*—a sort of gun-rest for aiming.

"Do you remember Tolstoi well, Kirill Grigoryevich?" I asked.

"As well as if he was standing here now."

"Do you remember his story *The Cossacks*?"

"Know it almost by heart. We all read it over and over. 'That's by our Tolstov,' we used to say."

"Who did he take the character of Lukashka from?"

"Lukashka was our shoemaker. But that *djigit's* name wasn't Lukashka. I've forgotten what his name was. But then, at that time, all our men were like Lukashka—all *djigits*."

"What about Maryanka?"

"She died not long ago."

Then he resumed his recollections.

"I remember the fine horses Tolstoi had—a bay and a roan. He liked to lead his horse out, get it excited, then jump into the saddle and gallop round the village. He was a fine horseman. That was the only reason we noticed him, his being a *djigit* and friend of Yepishka's. We never guessed he would become so famous. He lived next door to me. At first he lived at Glushok's on New Street, then he moved to Sekhin's—Uncle Yepishka's brother, Mikhail Petrovich Sekhin. His house was next to ours. Later, when Tolstoi became an officer, I heard tell he made a fine showing in the raids. Took his men out beyond the Old Yurt; that was how we happened to hear of his doings. But if he hadn't been a *djigit*, who among us would have paid any attention to him?"

"Is there anybody else in your village who remembers Lev Nikolayevich?"

"I don't think so. Maybe Yergushev—the old fellow's over eighty now."

"Yergushev—the name is familiar. Lev Nikolayevich mentions it in *The Cossacks*."

"Yes, the drunken Cossack lying on the ground. He's taken straight from life. Lev Nikolayevich didn't even change his name. Yergushev was a great one for drinking. He's a relative of ours."

"Did you realize later what a famous man had been living in your village, Kirill Grigoryevich?"

"Oh, yes; we found out long ago. As soon as his first books came out. We read them all, and the children were told about him in school. My nephew Dmitry Sekhin, son of Mikhail Sekhin who was the nephew of Uncle Yepishka, went to Yasnaya Polyana to see Tolstoi. Lev Nikolayevich gave him his autographed picture for our village. But the picture was stolen on the way back."

"How did that happen?"

"Let Dmitry tell you about that himself. He's serving in the Kizlyar-Greben Regiment now. You can see him tomorrow, if you like, near Pyatigorsk. His camp is near Yutsa. Give him my regards."

Early in the morning I arrived at the camp near the Yutsa mountain, about six versts from Pyatigorsk, to find that the Yekaterinodar Regiment was out drilling. The heat was unbearable and the dust too thick to see through. Drill was over at noon, and while the horses were being unsaddled and dinner prepared, I went to look for Dmitry Sekhin.

The regiments were stationed side by side. The Greben men had already returned to camp and I found Sekhin in his tent. I was confronted by a handsome Cossack with huge moustaches, wearing the blue trousers said to be "wider than the Black Sea," a white shirt and big black fur cap. Not yet having washed up, he was covered with dust from head to foot.

"I am Sekhin. Were you asking for me?" he asked peremptorily.

"Dmitry Mikhailovich?"

"Yes. What can I do for you?"

"I've come from Kirill Grigoryevich."

I introduced myself. It appeared that Sekhin had already heard of me as a writer. He invited me into the tent and I told him of my talk with Sinyukhayev and the purpose of my visit.

"I'll tell you all I know with pleasure," he said. "My meeting with Lev Nikolayevich is something I will never forget. It was the greatest event of my life."

With his permission I took out my notebook, and the following is reproduced from it.

"I reached Yasnaya Polyana on February 21, 1908. Drove up. Snow. A long lane. Two peasants coming down it. I looked closer: one was Lev Nikolayevich. I jumped out of the sleigh and ran up to him. He had turned into the snow to make way for the sleigh. I went up, bowed.

" 'Here's a remarkable case, Lev Nikolayevich,' I said. 'Fifty years later the nephew pays you a visit on behalf of his uncle.'

"Lev Nikolayevich didn't understand, just looked at me severely. I repeated my greeting.

" 'Ah, Palkin?' asked Lev Nikolayevich.

" 'No, not Palkin, but the nephew of Uncle Yeroshka.'

"Lev Nikolayevich frowned. He stood still and stared at the ground.

" 'Who is Yeroshka?' he said.

" 'The same Yeroshka whose guest you were fifty years ago, the man you hunted with and described in your story.'

" 'Yepishka? No!' and Lev Nikolayevich's face lit up. 'But I don't quite get the relationship.'

" 'He had a brother, Mikhail Petrovich. I'm his son, Dmitry Mikhailovich Sekhin.'

" 'Sekhin! Sekhin!'

"He gave me his hand and clasped mine warmly.

" 'And what are you—a captain?'

"He stared at my military coat.

" 'No, a lieutenant-colonel.'

" 'Well, let's go in.'

"He turned towards his house, then said suddenly:

" 'You ride up to the house in your sleigh and tell Ilya Vasilyevich I will be back in ten minutes.'

"I conveyed his message to Ilya Vasilyevich, who led me to a room downstairs. In ten minutes he invited me upstairs. There I found Gorbunov-Posadov, Gusev and two copyists. Lev Nikolayevich came in with beaming face and introduced me:

" 'Meet the nephew of my Uncle Yeroshka.'

"He began to ask me about the village and recalled what it had been like in his day.

" 'Are some roofs still thatched with reed?'

" 'Yes.'

" 'And are any of my contemporaries still alive?'

" 'Ivan Varfolomeyevich Yergushev.'

" 'And *chikhir*—do you still drink it? A fine drink, *chikhir*! And the fish called *shemaika*, do you still catch them?'

" 'There aren't many left in the river, and the few there are have grown smaller.'

" 'That's a pity. I remember everything perfectly: Starogladovskaya, and Old Yurt. How beautiful the mountains are! The Terek, and the steppe! That's the real life! And Lukashka, Mikhail Alexeyevich's brother. Oh, yes, I remember everything. And what about the house I lived in? And the Babenkovs' house, where my brother Nikolai lived? And Yepishka's hut?'

" 'Everything's been rebuilt.'

"Lev Nikolayevich got up.

" 'Gusev, there,' he said, 'he, too, would like to hear about the village.'

"Lev Nikolayevich left the room, but in five minutes he returned in the best of spirits, sat down and went on asking me about old times.

" 'My memory is failing, but I remember everything that happened then perfectly.'

"He again rose and went out, and several minutes later asked me into his study. I said I must go.

" 'Oh, no, sit down. Why so soon? I haven't had a real talk with you yet.'

" 'But, your grace...' I began. Lev Nikolayevich broke in:

" 'No formalities, please.'

" 'How else shall I address you? To call you Lev Nikolayevich would be too familiar.'

" 'What would you call me if we were in Greben?'

" 'Well, as you know, we call everybody older than ourselves uncle: Uncle Yepishka, for instance.'

" 'So you must call me Uncle Lev. That's very, very respectful.' He laughed kindly.

"I asked Lev Nikolayevich for his picture to hang in the Starogladovskaya school.

"He found one and wrote on it: 'To my friends in Starogladovskaya, from Lev Tolstoi.'

"I left in a glow of happiness, but soon my spirits were damped by misfortune: my bag was stolen on the way, and in my bag was the picture."

I discovered another old man in the Caucasus, a general in fact, who had served in the same battery as Lev Nikolayevich when they were both young. But all I could get out of him was:

"Hm, of course—we both had the honour of serving in the same battery. He was a fine officer."

G. A. Rusanov

Gavriil Andreyevich Rusanov (1846-1907): a lawyer, member first of the Ostrogozhsk, then of the Kharkov bar, for many years a close friend of Tolstoi's

VISIT TO YASNAYA POLYANA

(24-25 August, 1883)

...After that Tolstoi came to the conclusion that the younger generation—all those charming Perovskys—were headed toward ruin, that they had not seen the light, that they must be enlightened and returned to the true path.

"Perhaps you are right," I said, "yet the young people's favourite writer is Shchedrin. They prefer him to all others because he takes an interest in politics and contemporary affairs."

"And he deserves their love," put in Tolstoi. "I myself am fond of Shchedrin. He is growing as a writer, and a note of melancholy can be detected in his latest works."

The talk then turned to Turgenev.

"Is Turgenev an atheist?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," replied Tolstoi. "Turgenev is a fine person, with a great mind and big heart.... I love him and feel sorry for him.... He is so ill.... Have you heard how he is now?"

I told him the latest news gleaned from the papers.

"I read that," said Tolstoi. "They say that hordes of Russians go to see him and that that ... er ... what's his name?... Ogier?... read his comedy to him. A fine time for comedies!" he commented disapprovingly. "Not long ago, when he was still able to hold a pen, he wrote me a very kind letter in which he urged me not to stop writing."

"And do you intend to go on writing? I mean fiction."

"Yes, indeed. If a person can write he *must* write, no less than if a person can speak he *must* speak."

"Is it true that you don't read newspaper and other reviews of your works?"

"It is. But recently I made an exception to the rule. It was to read Gromeka's article in *Russkaya Mysl*. An excellent article. He explained things I had done intuitively in my works."

Then, pointing to his books standing on one of the shelves, he said:

"I fear nothing will remain of us in general and of me in particular."

"Why should you say such a thing?" I asked in astonishment.

"Because we write so much. Just look at the enormous quantities each of us writes; that which remains to be handed down through the centuries is never great in quantity."

"What about Shakespeare?" I replied.

"I have never been very fond of Shakespeare.... So much fuss has been raised about Shakespeare that no one dare say a word against him. But I've never thought much of him."

During our talk ... I happened to mention certain opinions of Tolstoi expressed by Russian and French critics.

"Of late," observed Tolstoi in response to my statements, "I have with some surprise noted a change of heart in respect to me. Formerly they scolded me unmercifully and refused to accept me as a thinker. Remember how it was after *War and Peace*? At that time I still gave consideration to such things. Remember Annenkov's article? In many respects it was discrediting, but after the denunciations of all the other critics I read it with relief. . . . How they did upbraid me! I can't even recall all the bad things they wrote about *Anna Karenina*."

I happened to remember a curious opinion about *Anna Karenina* I had heard a girl student express on a train two days before, and said to Tolstoi:

"They say it was very heartless of you to make Anna throw herself under a train; surely you couldn't have expected her to remain cooped up all her life with 'that bore Alexei Alexandrovich.' "

Tolstoi smiled.

"That reminds me of what Pushkin once said to a friend: 'Do you know the trick Tatyana has played on me?' he said. 'She has got married! I never expected that of her!' I can say the same thing about Anna Karenina. Very often my heroes and heroines play tricks on me. They behave as they would in real life; they do things as they are done in real life rather than as I would have them do.

"I am glad for the change in the French attitude towards *War and Peace* which I noticed after the translation made by Countess Paskevich," he went on. "I was surprised by the opinions expressed by the French people I met at the Moscow Exhibition. I could see that my view of history expressed in *War and Peace* was beginning to be approved. Do you remember how it was accepted when the book first came out?"

"I do, but there were other opinions as well, as, for instance, the opinion of the late Popov, who wrote a history of the War of 1812 which has not yet been published in entirety. I read his opinion in *The Nieva*."

"What Popov was that? Andrei Nikolayevich? Yes, he told me what he thought."

The talk shifted to something else at this point but I have forgotten what, I only remember telling him how Goncharov had observed to a women's delegation that brought him greetings on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his literary activities, that the taste of the reading public had so improved of late that people no longer required the aid of critics in passing judgement on an author.

"Has Goncharov been writing for fifty years already?"

"Yes."

"I wasn't aware of that. I feel sorry for Goncharov. He's so old and lonely and forgotten.... He suffers greatly."

"From what?"

"From outraged vanity."

I switched the subject back to Tolstoi's works and said, among other things, that his *Childhood* and Turgenev's *A Hunter's Sketches* had come out at almost the same time (*A Hunter's Sketches* in 1847-52 and *Childhood* in 1852) and that while there are many outmoded bits in *A Hunter's Sketches* (such as his sentimental depiction of little boys in "Bezhin Mead"), there is nothing in *Childhood* that has become outmoded or threatens to become so. To this Tolstoi replied that his *Childhood* was a bit treacly (I fear that wasn't the word he used, but the one he did carried the same idea). Naturally I could not acquiesce and voiced my protest. Tolstoi made no further comment.

"The only book of Turgenev's I really like is *A Hunter's Sketches*," he said at last, "although of course one can no longer describe the common folk as he does there. I do not put much stock in the rest of his work and am of the opinion that it will not outlive him. It seems to me that Turgenev will be as little known to posterity as Zhukovsky. Yet he is extremely good and kind and obliging, and he has helped a great many people."

Speaking of his poems in prose he added:

"I read them with pleasure, but think they would have produced much more of an impression thirty years ago."

I mentioned his "Song of Love Triumphant." Tolstoi found the theme revolting.

"Was your portrait of Natasha Rostova drawn from life, Lev Nikolayevich?" I asked him.

"Largely."

"And of Andrei Bolkonsky?"

"No, he was not.... Some of my characters are taken from living prototypes, others are not. The former are less successful, though drawings from life are always incomparably more vivid. But they become one-sided."

"Why is it that in your earliest period, the period before *War and Peace*, one finds many lyrical passages, while in *War and Peace* there are few, and in *Anna Karenina* none at all?"

"One has to grow out of mazurkas some day," said Lev Nikolayevich with a smile.

Our conversation touched on Dostoyevsky.

"*Notes from a Dead House* is an admirable piece of writing, but I do not think much of his other works," said Tolstoi. "Separate places have been pointed out to me, and they really are excellent, but on the whole—on the whole I find him dreadful! Forced language, a constant effort to discover original characters, which, when found, are only roughly sketched. On the whole, Dostoyevsky talks and talks, and in the end one is left in a fog as to what he wants to say. He's an odd mixture of lofty Christian morals, a defence of war and a toadying to priests, potentates and the state."

"Have you read *The Karamazov Brothers*?"

"Couldn't finish it."

"The trouble with that book," said I, "is that all the characters, beginning with the 15-year-old girl, speak in one and the same manner, the manner of the author."

"Not only do they speak in one and the same manner as the author, but they speak one and the same thoughts as the author and in a forced, artificial language."

"But *Crime and Punishment*? That's his best novel. What do you think of it?"

"*Crime and Punishment*? Yes, it's his best. But when you have read the first few chapters you know all that is to follow, the entire novel. The rest is just a repetition of what you have read at the beginning."

"At what age do you consider it advisable to give children your *Childhood* to read, Lev Nikolayevich?"

"At no age."

"At no age?"

"I think not. It seems to me *Childhood* and *Boyhood* are not books for children. But *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* and *Zhylin and Kostylin*—they're different," said Tolstoi, brightening visibly. "I love those two books. You can give *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* to children and be sure they'll enjoy it. Although it might be written better."

"In what respect?"

"The language might be made smoother, some of the crude folk expressions exchanged for others, but I can't do it. I always write like that," he said with a little smile.

"No," said Tolstoi after a slight pause, "I haven't succeeded in writing any historical novel except *War* *and Peace.* I intended writing a novel about the times of Peter the Great, then of the Decembrists. I was unable to write about the times of Peter the Great because they were too far removed: I found it difficult to penetrate the hearts and minds of people so different from us. And I was unable to write about the Decembrists for just the opposite reason: they were too close, too well known. Such a mass of notes, memoirs and letters of the period were at my disposal that I positively floundered in them."

"And was little Nikolai Bolkonsky to have been one of the characters in the novel about the Decembrists?"

"Oh, yes," said Tolstoi, his face lighting in a smile. Then, after a moment's pause: "And so I never made a trip to that Ostrogozhsk of yours. I had definitely intended to visit Ostrogozhsk in connection with my novel about the Decembrists."

"The Tevyashovs told me so. It was with them you intended staying, wasn't it?"

"No. What Tevyashovs? Who are the Tevyashovs? Ah, yes; Ryleyev, it seems, was married to a Tevyashova?"

"Yes."

"Is your Ostrogozhsk Uyezd really such an upright and flourishing place as I was told it was?"

"What shall I say? Personally I don't find it so."

At this point the conversation for some reason turned again to Turgenev.

"His descriptions of nature are exceptional," said I.

"Incomparable!" confirmed Tolstoi.

Then we spoke about Flaubert and Daudet. Tolstoi said he did not like Daudet's *Evangéliste*, but that a long time before he had read Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and although he had forgotten what it was about he remembered having liked it.

Among other things he said:

"I've written a tale that little children adore. I often tell it to them. The only thing it says is that once there was a little boy who found seven cucumbers. First he ate the littlest one, then the next, then the next, and so on. You should see their delight when I come to the place where he undertakes to eat the last cucumber, which was this big!" and Tolstoi, laughing, stretched out his arms to show how enormous the last cucumber was.

Again we began talking about art, and Tolstoi spoke of Lermontov.

"What a pity he died so young! What tremendous power he had! What couldn't he have done! He began immediately like one to whom all power is given. You will find nothing trivial in his writings," he said, emphasizing the adjective with a shade of contempt. "It is easy to write trivial stuff, but every word he wrote was the word of one to whom all power has been given.

"Turgenev is a literary man," went on Tolstoi. "Pushkin was too, and Goncharov was more of a literary man than Turgenev. Lermontov and I are not literary men."

During this talk I observed that on reading Pushkin one seems to be in the presence of a man who is clever, good-natured, sanguine and occasionally playful.

"True," said Tolstoi.

We spoke with regret of Turgenev's illness.

"Not long ago he was a strong, energetic old man," said Tolstoi.

"What are his relations with Viardot?" I asked.

"Purely platonic, I've been told," replied Tolstoi.

"I heard he had a daughter."

"But not of Viardot," said Tolstoi. "And there's some doubt about the daughter. But that's another story. He's in a bad way. I pity him greatly."

"Why do you say he's in a bad way?"

"He can't help knowing that however conscientiously Viardot takes care of him, there must be moments when she thinks: if only the end would come quickly!"

"People write that he dreams of returning to Russia."

"Yes, Turgenev came to realize in the end . . ." began Tolstoi, but left the sentence unfinished. "There's something disgusting and pitiable about the thought of that old man dying in a French house. Yes, he has a yearning to be in Russia—he couldn't help having such a yearning."

"They write that a telephone has been installed connecting him with the opera house."

"Ah, yes; he's in a bad way," repeated Tolstoi. "To think of an old man dying, fearing death and seeking consolation in a telephone, in opera music! Very poor consolation indeed!"

We began to talk about the prospects of the telephone.

"Great and marvellous prospects!" said Tolstoi. "Railways and the telegraph have brought great changes, but the telephone will bring even greater ones."

"What makes you think so?"

"Imagine, if you can, the following: the tsar has a message for the people; he speaks, and simultaneously his message is heard word for word in the administrative centres of every volost of Russia."

We began to talk about the present state of affairs in Russia.

"It's amazing, amazing what goes on in St. Petersburg!" said Tolstoi. "Instead of advising Tsar Alexander to do something for the welfare of the people, those in authority do everything to keep him from lifting a finger to help them. Something's sure to happen. . . . The masses are discontented, expectant, disappointed, and something is seething within them. Tsar Alexander's position is not to be envied. His predecessor spoiled things for him. Spoiled things by emancipating the peasants. He made himself a hero in the people's eyes, but the present tsar has no intention of doing anything for them, even though they expect him to. The whole thing is amazing. Amazing blindness. The only thing he can say to them is: 'Obey the Marshals of the Nobility.' He tells the peasants not to expect any increase in land grants because there will be none. How dare he say such a thing? What makes him so sure of it? The peasants demand it, everyone is talking and writing about it, and he says there will be no such thing. How does he know but that he may be forced to eat his words? Perhaps he will vanish from the scene altogether—he may die—and then the increase may be granted, or in the long run the administrative system may be changed, and who knows what will happen then?" asked Tolstoi hotly.

The conversation turned to Shchedrin.

"Have you read his *Modern Idyll*?" he asked. "Remember the trial of the minnows?"

"Indeed I do," I replied. "And those fops, too."

"A delightful thing," said Tolstoi, and quoted by heart a small piece about the fops. "He writes well," he concluded. "And what original language he uses!"

"Yes," I agreed, adding: "Dostoyevsky's language is also original."

"Oh, no," protested Tolstoi. "Shchedrin's is a very precise, superior, purely folk language, but Dostoyevsky's is forced and unnatural."

"... I read an announcement that you are to contribute an article on art to the *Khudozhestvenny Zhurnal* this year. Is it true?"

"Yes, I've promised them an article. I don't know why they should have published the announcement; I asked the editor not to do so, but he seems to have ignored my request. The article is written, but I have to look it through and revise it. I can't submit it otherwise, and that will take time which I simply haven't got at present."

"I believe that Turgenev goes over and over his works," I said.

"No-o," said Tolstoi hesitantly. "He writes quickly and does little revising. I saw his work-books—he writes in bound copy-books. He showed them to me."

"I was under the impression that he wrote according to Gogol's method," I said.

"What was Gogol's method?"

"Gogol advised writers to hide their first drafts and come back to them only after a long period of time had elapsed; revise them and hide them, revise them and hide them again and again, as many as eight times."

"That's a good method—allowing one's manuscript to lie untouched for some time. You read it then with different eyes."

N. V. Davydov

Nikolai Vasilyevich Davydov (1848-1920): a lawyer, chairman of the Moscow Regional Court from 1897 to 1908. A friend of Tolstoi's from 1878 and one to whom Tolstoi often applied for advice in legal matters concerning the peasants of his district

LEV NIKOLAYEVICH TOLSTOI

If Lev Nikolayevich became interested in a given question and found it of importance, he studied it thoroughly, systematically, from every angle, regardless of the time and labour involved, unsparing of himself even if it taxed him to the limit.

This was always true. In investigating the cases of prisoners and studying the characters of separate individuals among them, he would spend hours on end in jails in Krapivna, Tula or Moscow, talking to all sorts of "criminals." During the preparatory period and the actual writing of *Resurrection* Lev Nikolayevich attended many court trials, and once at his request I took him to the Tula Courthouse where a young Tula tradesman was being tried for an attempt on the life of a prostitute. Witnesses heard at the trial were: the victim herself, her companions and the "mistress" of the brothel where the "guest" plunged a knife into the side of the unfortunate girl. The jurors decided that the man was guilty, but only of wounding the girl, whereas she insisted that he be accused of attempted murder. When the trial was over Lev Nikolayevich went to the girl and urged her to forgive the man, especially since he had been sentenced to a jail term, saying that her present attitude would bring harm only to herself. But the kind words of this strange old man did not move her to mercy; on the contrary, she resented them, taking them as a mockery, and answered him sharply, even rudely, with a vicious scowl.

I remember that one of Tolstoi's visits to the Krapivna Uyezd Jail, made without having received the required permit, resulted in having the local administration demand the discharge of the Head of the Prison, an old man who had not dared refuse Tolstoi entrance. Thanks to the appeals on his behalf written by Tolstoi and Sophia Andreyevna to N. A. Zinovyev, then Governor of the Tula Province, this demand was not carried out.

I happen to have played a small role in inspiring Tolstoi to write three of his plays, namely: *The Power of Darkness*, *The Fruits of Enlightenment* and *The Living Corpse*. While I was serving as Prosecuting Attorney in the Tula courts I was once shocked by a case of infanticide heard in the regional court. It concerned the murder of a new-born babe by a peasant who was its father and who was a relative of and lived in the same house with the girl who gave birth to it. The striking aspect of this case, outside of the dramatic circumstances of the actual murder, lay in the behaviour of the murderer, who, harassed by a guilty conscience, made a public confession of his crime and urged that he be handed over to the courts and meted out punishment. When he was sentenced to convict labour he was satisfied, seeing in this a means of expiating his crime. This brought him consolation and made it possible for him to go on living. I related this case to Lev Nikolayevich in detail and, as I had expected, he was deeply interested. He went to the jail and spoke to the prisoner, and soon thereafter wrote his first play, in which he somewhat changed the circumstances, adding the poisoning of Marfa Koloskova's first husband but omitting an incident that had taken place in real life, namely, an attempt made by Yefrem Koloskov ("Nikita" of the play) to kill his daughter Yevfimya ("Anyuta" of the play) when he made a public confession of his crime and she, who loved him dearly, fell weeping at his feet. He struck her with all his might over the head with a thick club, feeling that it would be kinder to kill her while she was pure and innocent than to leave her to the hard lot that would be hers when he was gone. Fortunately the blow was ill aimed and so not fatal, but the girl did fall unconscious on the ground.

I remember Lev Nikolayevich's having told me a short while before (or perhaps during) the writing of *The Power of Darkness* that he had met an old peasant riding along the high road with whom he had entered into conversation. Tolstoi had been charmed by his modesty and benevolent disposition. The old man had told him, among other things, that he found it profitable to work as a seasonal labourer.

The idea of writing the comedy *The Fruits of Enlightenment* came to Tolstoi during the family's first winter in Moscow. This is how it happened. During a trip to Moscow in the eighties (I lived in Tula) I met a friend who possessed the powers of a medium, and he informed me that N. Lvov, then living in a house on the Smolensky Boulevard, was going to hold a spiritualistic séance. Lev Nikolayevich had once told me he longed to be present at such a séance so that he could verify his disbelief in the reality of what was supposed to take place, and so I asked my friend to arrange to have Tolstoi admitted. He obtained Lvov's consent to this, and I hastened to inform Lev Nikolayevich, who seemed overjoyed. He again told me that he could not understand how people could believe in the reality of spiritualistic phenomena; it was, said he, the same thing as believing that he could suck milk out of his walking-stick, a phenomenon which never had and never could occur.

The séance took place and was attended by P. F. Samarin and K. Y. Milioti in addition to the host, the medium, Tolstoi and myself. But the séance was a failure this time. We sat in the usual way, round a table in a dark room, the medium went into a trance, we heard knockings on the table and saw phosphorescent lights, but soon all this stopped. Samarin, who was catching at the lights in the dark, knocked against somebody's hand, and soon the medium woke up. That was the end. On the next day Lev Nikolayevich reasserted his opinion that spiritualism is either self-deceit on the part of the medium and those who are present at the séance, or deceit practised by professionals.

The Tolstois spent the winter in Yasnaya Polyana, and if I am not mistaken it was in November that the elder girls informed me that on their request their father had written a comedy about spiritualism, the outline of which he had sketched immediately after the unsuccessful séance at Lvov's house, and he had given them permission to hold an amateur performance of it in their house at Yasnaya. The girls asked me to undertake the directing of the play, to find actors and distribute the parts and give instructions as to stage settings.

Tatyana Lvovna acted the part of Tanya, the housemaid, in the play, Maria Lvovna, that of the cook. We had lawyer Lopatin come from Moscow to play the third muzhik. At the first rehearsal, which took place at my house in Tula, we discovered that Maria Lvovna and Lopatin were first-class actors. The next rehearsal was held at Yasnaya and was attended by Lev Nikolayevich. He was so delighted with the acting of Lopatin that as soon as the rehearsal was over he elaborated the role of the third muzhik, writing the new lines down in the notebook in which Lopatin had copied his role. At last the performance took place. It was a great success and seemed to give its author great satisfaction, for he laughed heartily during the scenes with the peasants.

The success of the performance led me to ask Lev Nikolayevich's permission to stage the play in Tula, this time publicly. He gave it. Some of the rehearsals were held in my house, some on the stage of the Meeting House of the Nobility. At one of these latter rehearsals the doorman announced that a muzhik who seemed to be sober was asking for me and insisting on being admitted into the hall. "We tried to drive him away but he wouldn't go," he said. I ran downstairs, guessing who that "sober muzhik" was, and a few minutes later, to the delight of all who were gathered there, brought back Lev Nikolayevich, whom the doorman had taken for a "muzhik" because of his more than modest dress. The play did not disappoint us.

Lev Nikolayevich was engaged in writing his last novel, *Resurrection*. He sent me the proofs and asked me to correct any mistakes he might have made as to the legal proceedings during the trial of Katyusha Maslova. He also asked me to legally formulate the appeal, the cross-examination, the verdict, etc. On the whole, he agreed with all of my remarks, with the exception of one which seemed to me very important, namely, the following: I advised Lev Nikolayevich, in order to avoid committing a formal legal error, to reduce the verdict of the jury to a mere statement of guilt, wording it briefly: "Guilty, but deserving of mercy." I felt there could be nothing improbable in their rendering a verdict of guilty since the evidence warranted it and the circumstances of Maslova's life (what the jurymen knew of it and not her real life as known to the reader) did not argue in her favour. But Lev Nikolayevich did not agree with me and left his original version, which was legally unsound.

During one of Tolstoi's stays in Moscow (I think it was in 1898 or 1899) I told him the details of a certain court case that inspired him to write his last important play, *The Living Corpse*, unfortunately never completed by the author. The circumstances of this case are sufficiently well known to admit of my not repeating them.

In describing the circumstances to Tolstoi I was sure he would be impressed by the dramatic situation in which the unfortunate lady found herself owing to the artificial manners and conventions complicating our life. An additional factor of interest in this tragic case was that all of the people involved seemed to be by nature fine and upright. Lev Nikolayevich really was interested and resolved then and there to use the material.

The following thing occurred some time later. A gentleman, poorly dressed, appeared at Tolstoi's Moscow house in Khamovnichesky Street and insisted on seeing Lev Nikolayevich. He was shown to Tolstoi's study, where he declared that he was the "living corpse" about whom Lev Nikolayevich had written. Lev Nikolayevich asked him in detail about his life and persuaded him at great length to stop drinking, promising that if he did, he, Lev Nikolayevich, would find him a situation. In parting the man promised to give up drinking. On that very day Lev Nikolayevich came to see me, told me about the unexpected visit and, convinced that the man would be true to his word, asked me to find him a modest post. I was able to do so. The man was given an appointment which he held for several years, until the day of his death, and all this time he was true to his promise not to drink.

One evening I found Fyodor Chaliapin at Tolstoi's house in Moscow. He sang several songs but Tolstoi was not particularly fond of the way he sang—he found it too loud and artificial. He was very much pleased with the playing of a balalaika orchestra conducted by Andreyev (they played Russian folk songs), which he heard at Sophia Nikolayevna Glebova's.

Lev Nikolayevich was a voracious reader, mostly of serious books. He also read fiction, but avoided poetry, and heartily disliked things like "Kuzma Prutkov" and the witty writings of Count Sologub.

He read aloud extremely well and enjoyed it, choosing such matter as the stories of Sleptsov (which he admired) with a fine sense of humour. To his own surprise, he once passed favourable judgement on his own writing. One evening at Yasnaya Polyana one of the members of his family was reading aloud a chapter from *War and Peace*; Lev Nikolayevich, who had remained in his own room because of his indisposition, came to the door of the dining-room and stood listening a little, then, entering the room, asked what they had been reading, observing that it was very well written.

A. F. Koni

Anatoly Fyodorovich Koni (1844-1927):
a prominent St. Petersburg lawyer and
public figure

LEV NIKOLAYEVICH TOLSTOI

On a fine warm morning, the 6th of June, 1887, I took my seat in the spring carriage that had been sent to meet me at the station in Yasenki on the Moscow-Kursk Railway, and set out for Yasnaya Polyana.

By ten o'clock I was having breakfast with the members of Tolstoi's household out on the lawn under spreading lime-trees. During the general conversation someone suddenly exclaimed: "Here comes Lev Nikolayevich!" I turned round quickly. Two paces away stood the Homer of the Russian *Illiad*, author of *War and Peace*. He was wearing a coarse linen blouse held in by a wide leather belt; one hand was thrust inside the belt, the other was holding a pewter teapot. Two things struck me immediately: the penetrating, almost lacerating glance of his stern grey eyes, which were lighted by an expression rather of searching righteousness than of gentle benignity, the glance of a judge and a thinker; and the exceptional neatness and cleanliness of his simple clothes, from the tan cap on his head to the home-made shoes worn over white socks. Tolstoi greeted me with great simplicity and, as he filled his teapot from the samovar, began to speak about a trial I had presided over at the end of the seventies, one which had caused a great deal of talk and argument at the time. The absence of any sign of affectation in his manner, the weightiness of his remarks and the sincerity of his tone, instantly did away with the barrier of self-consciousness and lack of ease that almost invariably hinders a first acquaintance. I felt as if I had known him for years and had met him again after a long separation.

At the close of our first evening together, I asked to be shown to the wing occupied by the Kuzminsky family, but Lev Nikolayevich said I was to spend the night in his study downstairs. He showed me to it.... He went out while I was undressing and returned to bid me good night. Then began one of those typically Russian talks carried on preferably in an entrance hall or sitting on the edge of a bed.... From that time on all my days at Yasnaya Polyana ended in this way.... I remember one of our conversations in particular. "What is your opinion of Nekrasov?" Tolstoi called to me from the other room where I heard him pulling something across the floor. I replied that I had the greatest admiration for his lyrical poetry.... As to his personal qualities, I put little stock in the vicious attacks made on him, and in any case considered the fact that he was a gambler insufficient cause to damn him as a human being and call him wicked. "He had a passion for gambling that reached the proportions of a vice," I said, "but not every person caught in the clutches of a vice is wicked." On hearing this, Lev Nikolayevich came into the room with glowing face and, sitting down on the edge of the bed, said joyfully: "That's it, that's it—just what I've always said; it's most important to make this distinction." And we were off on another of our long talks.

I was naturally interested in Tolstoi's attitude towards his peasants, about which such varied and preposterous rumours were spread.... The relations between the count and his neighbours were simple and natural. The inhabitants of the big house at Yasnaya Polyana were old and fast friends of the peasants, ready at any moment to lend aid in case of illness, accident or want—to treat with medicines, offer advice, appeal for assistance in the higher spheres accessible to them and to sympathize with them in misfortune. And all of this was done without any show, without truckling for favour, and without a cold, self-righteous sense of doing one's duty towards one's "lesser brethren." The peasants, too, showed the same simplicity in their attitude towards Lev Nikolayevich.... They admired him not only for his bigness of heart, but for his knowledge as well. I was told they said of him: "He's got brains, even if he is a nobleman." On one of our walks Tolstoi told me about a journey he had once made in the company of pilgrims to a Russian shrine (to Kiev, it seems, or the Optina Hermitage), during which his companions accepted him as one of themselves and therefore said what they pleased in his presence. With gentle humour he told me the contemptuous opinions of the "gentlefolk" he had heard expressed on the road and at inns and taverns.... Sometimes the peasants confided their inmost thoughts to him.

All this came vividly back to me one evening in Moscow a few years later while listening to a heated discussion (in which Tolstoi took part) about marriage as the basis of family life. With drawn brows he listened to one of the company speak of the risk a young girl of his acquaintance had taken by marrying a man "without means or position."

"Are they what make for happiness in family life?" asked Tolstoi.

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"They are," said the man, sticking to his point. "You consider this nonsense, Lev Nikolayevich, but experience proves that it is not."

Tolstoi shrugged his shoulders and, turning to me, said:

"I take a different view of family happiness, and often recall a talk I had with a peasant named Gordei Deyev at Yasnaya Polyana many years ago. 'Why are you looking so glum, Gordei?' I asked him. 'Has something happened?' 'A great misfortune has happened, Lev Nikolayevich,' he said. 'My wife has died.' 'Was she young?' 'Oh, no. She was years older than me; I didn't marry her by choice, I was married off.' 'I see; then she must have been a good worker?' 'Good worker? She was no worker at all. Ailing all the time. She's been lying up on the stove-bunk for the last ten years. Couldn't do a stroke of work.' 'Then why are you so downcast? Things will be easier for you now.' 'Ah, what are you saying, Lev Nikolayevich! Easier? Used to be I'd come home after work and she'd look down at me from up on the stove and say: "Have you had anything to eat today, Gordei?" Who'll ask me that now?' It is this feeling," concluded Tolstoi, "rather than 'means and position,' that brings happiness and gives meaning to family life."

In reviewing the impression made upon me by what Tolstoi said in 1887, I turn to refresh my memory to the notes jotted down in my diary. . . . I should like to reproduce some of Tolstoi's ideas in the exact form in which I heard them from his lips. "In every work of literature," he said, "we must look for three elements. The most important is what the author has to say, next is the love the author shows for his subject, and last is his technique. Only complete harmony between what the author has to say and the love with which he says it can create a true work of art, and if these two elements exist, the third element, technique, comes of itself. When you come right down to it, Turgenev has very little to say, but he is possessed of great love for his subject and wonderful technique. On the other hand, Dostoyevsky has tremendous things to say and no technique at all; Nekrasov has something to say and the technique of saying it, but he lacks true love for his subject."

"A writer has nothing to learn from contemporary critics" (end of the eighties) "because they are not interested in what a writer has to say but only in his technique, whereas the true task of a critic is to discover and point out the ray of light in a work of art without which it is nothing. We must write *pour le gros du public*" (for the masses). "The appraisal of such a reading public and their love is the best reward a writer can have, and the taste of the 'big public' is always the right taste, despite the snubbing of certain books by the critics. This public seeks moral enlightenment in a work of art, no matter how '*risqué*' the subject matter may be—that is, however openly the author speaks of things that are commonly and hypocritically not mentioned."

"Nature is better than people. There are no 'split personalities' in nature; it is always consistent. It must be loved, for it is always beautiful and always toiling. Turgenev has described the sleepless nights he spent on hunting trips listening to nature at work. He seemed to hear her laboured breathing, even to hear her grunt from time to time—umph, umph!—from her creative efforts. Under the blazing sun the steppe of Samara is monotonous and of little interest to the observer, but how lovely it is at night, when the earth drinks in great breaths of the cool air and the sky arches in a fathomless dome above it, and from off the earth tender little sounds made by the toads rise to the infinite spaces above. . . ."

"We are very liberal in calling people 'kind-hearted' and are fond of holding our tongues about dreadful social wrongs as soon as they cease to exist, as if there were no danger of their reappearing in a different form. That is what we did about serfdom and its horrors as soon as the peasants were emancipated. The people and the evil were forgotten. I myself knew a vice-governor who was generally liked and enjoyed the reputation of being kind-hearted, despite the fact that he had at one time caused several peasants to be lashed to death. On the whole, cruelty often changes its form and manifests itself where least expected. At the end of the seventies a high official, who had once held liberal views but had since repented of the fact, came to Yasnaya Polyana and tried to prove the desirability of reintroducing corporal punishment, saying that the system of imprisonment cost the state too much money. He added that since some prisoners showed great ingenuity in devising means of escape, the opportunity of this should be removed by depriving the more serious felons of—their sight! I requested him never to come and see me again," said Tolstoi in conclusion.

During our talks I often mentioned cases I had become familiar with in the course of my legal practice. Among them was one destined to supply the subject matter of one of Tolstoi's later novels.

When I was Prosecuting Attorney of the St. Petersburg Regional Court, a gentleman came to see me. . . . His clothes and manners indicated that he was accustomed to move in the highest circles. He seemed greatly distressed and complained that the Assistant Prosecuting Attorney had refused to hand his letter to a prisoner named Rosalia without first reading it. I explained that that was one of the rules of the prison. "Then you read it," he said in some agitation, "and order him to give it to Rosalia."

Rosalia turned out to be a Finnish girl, a prostitute who had been convicted of stealing one hundred rubles from a client and handing them over to the "madame" (the widow of an army major who kept a brothel of the lowest sort in a by-street near Sennaya Square). As seen at the trial, she was a young girl still bearing faint traces of prettiness, with a voice hoarse from drink and the other vices of her profession, and a cynicism that allowed her to utter obscenities without turning a hair. The Attorney for the Defence made a trite appeal, but the jurors scarcely listened to him and sentenced her to four months of imprisonment.

"Very well," I said to the young man, "I will not read your letter. Tell me in a word what it contains."

"I am asking her to marry me and hope that she will accept my proposal and that we can be married as soon as possible."

"It cannot be very soon because she will have to serve out her term," I said. "You are a member of the nobility, are you not?"

"Yes," he said, and mentioned an old and aristocratic name, explaining that he was a graduate of one of our most select colleges and now held a position in one of the ministries. He handed me the letter and was about to go away when I began the following conversation:

"Where did you meet this girl?"

"I saw her at the trial."

"What is there about her that has captivated you? Her looks?"

"No. I'm near-sighted and could scarcely make out her features."

"Then why do you want to marry her? Do you know her history? Shall I show you the data on her case?"

"No, I know everything; I was one of the jurymen."

"Do you, in the words of Nekrasov, hope to 'rescue this lost soul from the mire of sin,' reform her and help her to forget her past?"

"No, I shall be very busy and probably have time only to come home for dinner and to sleep."

"Do you think it possible to introduce her to your relatives and have her move in your circle?"

My interlocutor shook his head.

"Then she will be left in complete idleness. Do you not fear that under the circumstances she will be unable to resist the lure of her past? Your domestic life may become a very hell."

He got up and began to pace the floor of my office in great agitation.

"All that you say is true," he said at last. "And still I intend to marry her."

The next day I received a letter from him thanking me for talking to him but confirming his determination to marry. He asked me to use my influence in preventing the prison authorities from delaying his marriage. Before I had had a chance to reply Rosalia sent a note in which she consented to become his wife. Two days later I received a sharp, angry letter from the young man accusing me of having "interfered with his personal plans." By that time Lent had set in and there could be no talk of immediate marriage. The young man began to visit Rosalia frequently; at their very first meeting she had to tell him she had been summoned from solitary confinement, to which she had been sentenced for having let out a string of obscenities. He brought her all sorts of things for her marriage trousseau: lingerie, jewelry, silks and satins. Towards the end of Lent

Rosalia came down with typhus and died. The news seemed to be a dreadful blow to her fiancé. After that I lost sight of him.

Two or three months later the woman warder in charge of Rosalia's section of the jail told me that Rosalia, being a very good and kind girl, had grown fond of her and told her why the gentleman had resolved to marry her. Rosalia, it seems, was the daughter of a widower who had rented land in one of the Finnish gubernias from a rich lady living in St. Petersburg. Feeling ill, the widower had gone to St. Petersburg, where he learned from the doctors that he had cancer of the stomach and could not expect to live much longer. This news made him go to the owner of his land and ask her not to forget his daughter when he was gone. A promise to care for her was given, and after his death the child was brought to the landowner's home. At first Rosalia was dressed up and made much of, but when interest in her wore off she was sent to the servants' quarters. There she lived and was brought up to the age of sixteen, when she was noticed by a young man, a relative of the family, who had just finished a stylish college. He it was who had sought the girl's hand in prison. One summer, while a guest at his relative's country-house, he had seduced the unfortunate girl, and when the results of their relations became evident the indignant woman had turned Rosalia out of the house instead of turning out the young man, which would have been more just. The young man abandoned her; Rosalia gave birth to a child, which she put in a home, and after that began her slow descent in the world, step by step, until she found herself in the brothel near Sennaya Square. In the meantime the young man, after a brief term in the provinces, settled in St. Petersburg, where he was caught up in the round of business and intellectual life.

One fine day fate decreed that he was to be a member of the jury of the Regional Court, and it was there that he recognized in the wretched prostitute the victim of his youthful passion and selfishness.

Tolstoi listened with rapt attention to the story of Rosalia, and the next morning he told me he had been thinking about it all night and suggested that I should write out the story in chronological order and send it to the Posrednik Publishers. Two months after I left Yasnaya Polyana I received a letter from him in which he asked me if I intended writing the story. I replied by imploring him to use it in a new novel.

Eleven years later appeared his extraordinary *Resurrection.*

One of the most vivid recollections of my first visit to Yasnaya is of an evening spent with Tolstoi when we went to call on his wife's relatives, who lived some seven versts from Yasnaya and were celebrating a family anniversary. Lev Nikolayevich suggested that we should go on foot, and throughout the walk he was in high spirits and delightfully talkative. But when we arrived at the splendid house where the table was laden with all sorts of comestibles, his mood changed, he grew dour, and within half an hour he suddenly sat down next to me and said under his breath: "Let's go away." We did, disappearing without making our adieus. When we had crossed the high road about half a verst from Yasnaya, we found the bushes filled with glowworms. With childlike delight Tolstoi began collecting them, putting them in his sorry-looking cap and carrying them triumphantly home, his face lighted by their greenish phosphorescent glow. . . .

The next time we met was in 1898. At that time he was engaged in writing his tract on art, for which purpose he attended a rehearsal of an opera. With indescribable humour he told me his impressions, describing the sentimental crooning of the chorus, which was interrupted in a most unsentimental manner by the shouting of the conductor. . . .

During Easter Week in 1904 I again visited Yasnaya Polyana. Tolstoi was against the ruinous war which our supercilious diplomacy, self-complacent unpreparedness and contempt for the lessons of history had brought on with Japan, a country which had long been nursing an injured national pride. But his Russian heart quaked at the thought of the probable outcome. During my stay we received word that Makarov had been killed, and this greatly upset him. He was always avid for news, rode horseback to Tula to get it, and was constantly turning to this subject in his conversation.

Vera Velichkina

Vera Mikhailovna Velichkina (1868-1918): a physician, after the Revolution a member of the collegium of the People's Commissariat of Health, member of the Communist Party, wife of V. D. Bonch-Bruyevich

WITH LEV NIKOLAYEVICH DURING THE FAMINE

MAKING THE ACQUAINTANCE OF THE TOLSTOI FAMILY

The hard winter of 1891-92 had set in. Some thirty-six gubernias of the black-earth district had suffered from drought. Famine was expected. All sorts of circles and societies were formed in Moscow to collect funds to aid the starving peasants. Moscow society was as if roused from a long sleep, was all astir, like an ant-hill that has been encroached upon. Everybody seemed pleased to have something to do. Wherever you went you heard people talking only about the famine. I, too, was roused and longed to leave Moscow to go to where people were in such dire need. I had no idea of what I could do to help them, indeed I feared there was nothing I could do, having no resources at my disposal. But I felt I could not remain in a warm room in Moscow, that I must go out there where the sufferings of the people grew more alarming with every day. But how was I, a young girl who had never been separated from her family and could not imagine living without them, to do this?

One day an acquaintance told me that the Tolstois had opened dining-rooms for the starving peasants and were in need of people to help run them. She gave me the address of a woman who she said could give me all the information I needed. On returning home I told my mother. Appreciating my feelings, mother did not object to my going to the famine area, she even advised me to. I applied to the address I had been given. From there I was sent to speak to Margarita Alexandrovna Sabashnikova. The sight of the mansion in which she lived made a bad impression on me, which was later deepened. She received me as if I had come to ask a favour. After telling me they already had enough people, she said I might leave my name and address and she would let me know if anything turned up. Naturally nothing ever did, and the chilly reception she had given me made me lose all desire to get in touch with the Tolstois. Mother, however, told me to apply directly to them.

At first I was shocked by the idea: how could I go to people uninvited, force myself upon them, especially upon a person like Tolstoi? I was horrified by the thought that they might think I was doing it only for the sake of making their acquaintance. I had been received once as a person begging favours, and once was enough. I had no sympathy with the ideas of Tolstoi as I then understood them, and no desire to understand them better. And so I had no motive at all for applying to Tolstoi. I would have preferred applying elsewhere, but where?

In the end mother prevailed on me to go to them. It cost me a great effort of will to overcome my natural shyness and approach total strangers, but in the end of December, 1891, I did it.

I was received by Sophia Andreyevna. The look in her eyes was more than cold, it was hostile. Later she told me that the sight of my fragile body convinced her I could render no serious assistance and would be only a burden to her family. Nevertheless she did not completely dishearten me; she told me to come back on the 3rd of January when her husband and daughters would return from the country; she herself could not say anything definite because she was not informed as to how matters stood.

On the 3rd of January I called again. This time I was received by Tatyana Lvovna in the large room upstairs; she, too, was chilly, though our conversation lasted a little longer. "We have opened seventy dining-rooms," she said. "We cannot open more because of lack of funds and we have enough people to run these; furthermore, there are countless applicants—everybody wants to go to the famine area."

I said nothing, sure that the matter was closed. If such countless numbers were applying, why should they take an unknown girl without any recommendations and without the least knowledge of what was to be done?

"However," put in Tatyana Lvovna unexpectedly, "come back in three days; it will be clear then how things stand; perhaps we will find something for you to do."

I went away feeling that my case was hopeless.

However, three days later I was again standing in front of the door of No. 15 Khamovnichesky Street. How many times later was I to stand in the same place, and with the same trepidation! Scarcely had I pulled the bell this time when the door was opened and there stood a tall heavy-set man in a white sheepskin jacket who said to me:

"What is it?"

I instantly recognized him, and instead of answering I said:

"Are you Lev Nikolayevich?"

"Yes, what can I do for you?"

In a few disconnected phrases I managed to murmur what I had come for.

"I know. My daughter has told me. Are you frozen?"

I said I was not.

"Go inside and wait for me if you are, I'll be back soon. If you aren't, come along with me, if it won't be out of your way, and I'll explain how things stand."

We set off. To my astonishment, Lev Nikolayevich looked upon me as one already recruited to work in their cause and explained to me what my task would consist of.

"Last night the following comparison popped into my head: we're like people trying to fill little bottles from a big basin, pouring just the right amount into each bottle without spilling a drop of the precious liquid. That is a very hard task and requires complete concentration of attention on each separate bottle in turn. You will see this for yourself when you get there. When do you think of leaving?" he asked.

I said that was up to him; I was ready to go at once.

"Very well. Drop in tomorrow or the day after and talk things over with my younger daughter. She'll tell you how to go about it. Meanwhile we'll get the necessary papers ready for you."

We parted. I had not dreamed of such instant success. It appeared that the question of whether or not they had the means or opportunity to open up more dining-rooms had never even presented itself to Lev Nikolayevich.

The next day was the 12th of January, and, assuming that the family would celebrate Tatyana Lvovna's name-day, I waited until the following day to call on them again.

This time I was shown to a little room belonging to Tolstoi's second-eldest daughter, Maria Lvovna, who was very kind to me and explained everything.

"When have you decided to leave?" she asked.

"I could go today," I said. "The sooner the better."

"My, aren't you in a hurry!" she laughed. "But that is fine. While we are away it will be a very good thing to have an extra person there. You will not be lonely. My brother is in charge and he will tell you what to do. We'll give you a letter to him. And there's another girl there, a charming girl, a doctor's assistant. I'm sure you and she will get on famously. She is practising medicine."

Just then Lev Nikolayevich came in.

"Papa," said Maria Lvovna, turning to him, "she wants to leave today. We must give her letters to Ilya and Yermolayev."

"We must indeed; you write them. Tell Yermolayev to fit her out properly—it's very cold and she'll have to travel a long distance. I'll write to Ilya myself. We left lots of warm things with Yermolayev."

They began discussing how to dress me for the road, laughing at my miniature proportions. Two pretty little fair-haired children came running in—a boy and a girl—and threw themselves upon their father. He stroked their hair and replied absent-mindedly to their chatter.

At last, armed with the necessary letters and advice, I took leave of father and daughter.

"We'll be seeing you soon in Begichevka," they said in parting.

MY ARRIVAL IN THE VILLAGE

A few hours later I was in the train feeling utterly forlorn. Never before had I been separated from my family for any length of time. At Tula I changed into a dirty, crowded 3rd-class carriage (I should have gone by the Ryazhsk-Vyazemsky Railway). It was unbearably hot inside and the air was thick with smoke from *makhorka* cigarettes. Most of the passengers were peasants, and, despite the late hour, new passengers kept pushing into the carriage at every station. The weather was freezing, 25°C. below zero, if not more, and cold air rushed in clouds into the carriage every time the door was opened during the prolonged stops at stations. I was dizzy from weariness and *makhorka* fumes, but happier than I had been in a long time. The sorrow of parting with my family had worn off by this time, leaving me to a happy anticipation of what was before me.

My neighbours in the carriage began asking me where I was going and for what purpose. At first I was reticent, but soon I found myself telling them everything: where I was going and why, what I had heard and what I had read in the papers. I was not aware that I was riding through regions of the Tula Gubernia that were as badly struck by the famine as those to which I was going. Presently I was sitting in the middle of the carriage surrounded by a crowd of peasants, mostly men, who listened eagerly, attentively, and with sympathy to everything I said. From time to time I heard somebody tell a neighbour not to blow smoke in my face "or her head'll go spinning from that tobacco of yours," or warn the crowd not to press round me so closely. I was no longer conscious of the *makhorka* or my weariness, so elated was I by feeling myself at one with these people with whom I had come into direct contact for the first time in my life.

I have not the slightest remembrance of what I, a young, inexperienced, ecstatic girl, said to those hungry bearded men. I only remember with what regret I left that hot and crowded carriage. Kindly wishes were called out after me as I climbed out at my station and strong hands carried my bags for me.

The station guard led me over to agent Yermolayev, to whom I had a letter from Tolstoi, while the carriage that had given me such a hospitable reception went rumbling off down the rails.

Two young men presented themselves to me in the station. They were the Rayevsky boys, owners of the estate to which I was going and which had become the organizational centre of the dining-rooms. The boys were on their way to Tula.

"Capital," said Yermolayev. "You'll spend the night at my place and in the morning the same horses will take you to Begichevka."

I spent the night on a hard sofa in the parlour of Yermolayev's house. Next morning he gave me breakfast and got me ready for the journey. I was exclusively a town dweller and had no idea of how one ought to dress when setting out on a journey across the fields in the middle of winter. We had a drive of some forty versts ahead of us, the day was cold and sunny. Yermolayev, however, took more than the ordinary precautions, wrapping me up until I was turned into an immobile bundle of furs.

When he had fastened the fur rug in place on the sledge and warned the driver to "See that nothing happens to the young lady!" we rode off.

Never before had I ridden alone across sweeping, snow-covered plains. All thoughts of town, of warm rooms, soft furniture and shaded lamps were left far behind, and I gave myself up wholly to impressions of this my new life.

We passed very few villages on the way, but how struck I was by those I saw! I was used to the villages in forest regions surrounding big towns, where the houses were built of logs, the richer ones even of brick.

Here on the woodless plain we came upon small clusters of tiny huts made of rough stone thatched with straw which showed gaps in places (later I learned that this same straw served as fodder for the cattle). The huts had no chimneys, they were "black-heated," that is, had open hearths in the middle with the smoke escaping through a hole in the roof. I am going to work in huts like those, I said to myself. I was too engrossed in my thoughts to talk to the driver. After riding for some hours he pointed into the distance with his whip and said, turning to me:

"That's Gorki over there. We've almost arrived."

True enough, presently we drove up to a big one-storeyed house with a green roof and came to a halt in front of the door.

Inside the house a servant announced:

"God's sent us a young lady."

Somebody came into the hall to greet me and undertake the unwrapping of me, which was not an easy task.

When at last I was free of my furs and coats, I explained who I was and what I had come for, adding that I had letters for Ilya Lvovich. A tall, thin, blond young man declared himself to be Ilya Lvovich and took the letters. I was invited to have dinner.

My first impression of the house was decidedly unpleasant. After the warm comfort of our own house, everything here seemed dirty and unattractive. There were many rooms, but for some time I could not make out what each of them was for and where I could find a retreat. Everyone was wearing felt boots, which meant the floors must be cold.

After dinner Yelena Mikhailovna (the name of the young girl Maria Lvovna had told me about) showed me to my room, then took me into hers, where she had a small store of medicines. After that she left me alone to put myself and my things in order.

Heavens, how lonely I felt! I did not know how to put anything in order, didn't know where anything was, not even water to wash with. All the servants were men—in other words, I must do everything myself. I knew none of the people here and I felt we had little in common. Try as I might to keep up my spirits I was so overwhelmed by a childlike homesickness in this strange inhospitable room that at last I burst into tears. This relieved me, and after a short cry I went to Ilya Lvovich and asked him to give me some work to do. He was deep in conversation with Yelena Mikhailovna, and on hearing my request they both laughed.

"Just got here and asking to be put to work already! There's nothing to do at the moment."

Nothing to do? I must have looked extremely dejected, for Yelena Mikhailovna hastened to say: "When supper time comes I'll take you to the dining-room in the next village. Until then have a rest."

There was nothing for it but to wait until evening.

WORK BEGINS

The first dining-room I saw made a great impression on me. It, too, was set up in a "black-heated" hut, most of the huts in that district being of that sort. I had never been inside of one before. I found it very ugly and gloomy, with its smoke-blackened walls. It was small, smelt of smoke and was packed with people.

We were met with low bows, and a muzhik with a coal-black beard, black eyes and the most genial face in the world held out a sieve to us filled with hunks of delicious black bread still hot from the oven. We tried the bread and the soup, which everyone held out to us to be tasted from his spoon. People were seated at the table by this time and the warm smoky little hut soon took on an air of cosiness. The owner of the house, also a very kindly woman to all appearances, was so polite and attentive that we were sorry when we had to leave.

On the way back I remarked to my companion that the owners seemed to be very pleasant people.

"Yes," she replied, "but he is a sharp one despite his gentle manners."

To me, who was having my first experience of spreading charity, these words meant little.

The next day I found myself something to do. In Gai, one of the neighbouring villages, some misunderstanding in respect to the dining-room had arisen and Ilya Lvovich told Yelena Mikhailovna somebody ought to go and look into it, but there was nobody to send. I overheard and offered my services.

"But you don't understand the work yet. And you'd have to go without a driver; we have no extra hands."

I asked him to show me the road and said I'd find the way by asking. As for the sledge, I could drive it myself.

Ilya Lvovich accepted my offer. They hitched the horse to a huge sledge of a sort I had never ridden in before. I could not find a comfortable sitting position, but this did not worry me; I drove standing up.

Evening was drawing in and a slight wind had sprung up. The village, however, was close at hand and I had not the slightest doubt but that I could fulfil the task I had undertaken.

Soon I was in Gai and had found the dining-room, where people had already gathered for the evening meal. The carrying out of this first independent task gave me some truly blissful moments. Here in this crowded hut I instantly felt at home. True, I understood little of what they told me at first, but I listened carefully to everything that was said, made notes, then discussed the matter with them. I left feeling happy and gratified.

It was dark by the time I got back. I found everyone alarmed about me, and a gentleman who had arrived in my absence had sent his coachman to look for me. It was no doubt because of my poor knowledge of the roads that I had missed him.

During the next few days I helped Yelena Mikhailovna with her medical work, painstakingly measuring out powders, which we gave to little boys with coughs who came in great numbers into the hall of the house asking for a remedy.

Little by little I learned what was to be done. I do not remember all the little tasks I did, perhaps because everything was so vague at the time and I was not called upon to do any big thing that would leave a lasting impression. We worked together in a friendly, companionable way. Yelena Mikhailovna tirelessly treated the sick, I sometimes accompanied her on her calls and tried to be of help to her.

There were at that time only seventy or eighty dining-rooms, but some of them were in distant villages and were managed by other helpers whom I had not yet met. The project of the dining-rooms was first undertaken not by Tolstoi, but by his good friend Ivan Ivanovich Rayevsky, who had opened the first six with his own money, calling them "orphans' retreats." In the autumn Tolstoi had journeyed throughout this region, then the centre of the famine, to acquaint himself with the true state of affairs, and had decided to take up residence here temporarily. However, he was able to do this only at the beginning of November, when news from these parts became more and more alarming. He and his two daughters arrived at the home of Ivan Ivanovich Rayevsky with five hundred rubles donated by Sophia Andreyevna to "fulfil the will of God," as he expressed it, "by feeding the victims and giving them whatever there was to give."

Soon after Tolstoi's arrival Rayevsky fell seriously ill and died, leaving everything in the hands of Lev Nikolayevich, who expanded the project until it reached enormous proportions. Sophia Andreyevna then wrote her appeal for help which was published in the *Russkiye Vedomosti* and which brought a flood of donations of money, grain and clothes.

The Filosofovs, a neighbouring family of landlords, undertook a similar project but on a much smaller scale. When I first arrived in the village I found a very young but energetic and capable girl named Natalia Ivanovna living on their estate. I soon made her acquaintance. She was living all alone in a tiny house where subsequently all of us who had come to aid the victims used frequently to gather. I was astonished that she could live all alone, but later I discovered that the servants on the estate were her devoted helpmates.

One fine morning a volunteer working in one of the more remote districts arrived at our house and I was surprised and delighted to discover in him an old friend, M. A. Novoselov. He had known me almost from childhood, and for me, who was feeling lonely among my new acquaintances, it was a comfort to see a familiar face. "How our silent little friend has perked up!" exclaimed Yelena Mikhailovna. "Just see how her eyes are sparkling!" From that moment I felt more at ease with my associates and our relations became closer.

And so, in the two weeks I spent at Begichevka before the arrival of the Tolstois, I learned what I was expected to do and began to feel at home with my associates.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE TOLSTOIS

THE ORGANIZATION OF WORK, THE DISTRIBUTION OF CLOTHES

At the end of January we got word that the other Tolstois were on their way. By that time Ilya Lvovich was homesick for his wife and family and glad of the opportunity to go back to them. But the rest of us were disconcerted by the news. No doubt it meant that we must change our way of life and become more serious. Ilya Lvovich was a bit nervous, he even asked Yelena Mikhailovna half jokingly to hide his bottle of rowan wine among her medicines. She laughed at him and asked him to tell her what his father was like. I had no idea what changes we might expect, but I wanted none at all. I was sorry to have our friendly efforts interrupted and to give up the good times we had together in our leisure moments.

At last they arrived. Sophia Andreyevna accompanied her husband and daughters. I was too timid even to look at Lev Nikolayevich. But Maria Lvovna was wonderfully good—kind and earnest and filled with a sense of the necessity and importance of the work we were doing. I liked her even better this time than when I had met her in Moscow. With the greatest sympathy she inquired how I was getting on and if I found any difficulty with the work; I instantly felt that here was a good and sincere friend.

With the arrival of Tolstoi our work became more systematic. We got up before seven every morning, for by that time the hall would be crowded with petitioners. If we were late in rising, Lev Nikolayevich would knock at our doors. Our mornings were spent in hearing the appeals of these people. Later one of us was left on duty at home while the rest, having first received instructions from Lev Nikolayevich, went to the surrounding villages. He was always informed of every aspect of our work, remembered even trifling details, and knew exactly where we must go and what we must do. But the interviews in the hall always upset him and we tried to finish with them before he got there so that he could spend his mornings writing in peace. Whenever we were able to do this he felt better, more composed. But we were not always able to because he got up very early and could not bear to see the peasants kept waiting.

As a matter of fact the interviews in the hall were one of the saddest aspects of our work. From early morning the hall was thronged with all sorts of applicants. It was impossible to get to the bottom of things on the spot; we had to go to the villages and investigate each separate case. To heighten the emotional effect of their pleas the peasants would resort to histrionic scenes; Lev Nikolayevich was constantly being humiliated by having them fall on their knees before him. One day when a peasant did this, Lev Nikolayevich dropped on his knees beside him.

"Very well, we'll have to talk this way if it suits you better," he said serenely. Only then did the embarrassed peasant get up.

Once a woman prostrated herself before him and wailed so incoherently that Lev Nikolayevich was unable to understand her request. It turned out she was asking him to take her child off the list of those to be fed at the dining-room. Lev Nikolayevich was greatly surprised: most requests were for just the opposite.

"Let me be the only one to lose my immortal soul," said the woman. "There may be nothing for us to eat at home, but even so I won't sacrifice my child to the devil."

The matter was that in many parishes the priests had been going about warning the people not to accept help from Tolstoi because he was the agent of the devil.

"Think you the devil appears in evil aspect?" they said. "Oh, no! He comes in the guise of charity, offering bread to the starving. But woe to those who succumb to the temptation!"

It was hard indeed for the starving to resist this temptation, and so there were few who followed the example of this woman. Moreover, the people did not really believe their priests. But there was a great deal of talk of this sort. In many places we heard ourselves called children of Satan. This attitude on the part of the peasants represented a real danger as we travelled, alone and unprotected, from village to village.

Sophia Andreyevna was shocked by the dirt and disorder in our rooms. The first thing she did was to set about tidying the house with characteristic energy. She herself scrubbed the floors and dusted the furniture; a clean cloth appeared on the table; in general we became aware of an exacting housewife among us. Then she gave attention to the treasury, which until then Yelena Mikhailovna had been in charge of. Sophia Andreyevna examined our stores and discovered an accumulation of all sorts of cloth, clothes, and linen which had been donated to the cause. Much of it was unfit for the peasants' use in its present state. There was a whole bale of children's knitted things, excellent in quality but too fancy for our village children.

The distribution of these things was such a ticklish task that all of us avoided it. At first Tatyana Lvovna had undertaken it, but it had cost her such unpleasantness that she had refused to go on with it. Once she had told two or three women in the village of Penki to come to the house on the following day to be given clothes for their children. Before she was even out of bed the next morning the yard was filled with women. In their joy the women she had spoken to had confided their good luck to their neighbours, and here were all the village women come to partake of it. "We're all from Penki!" they cried. "We heard clothes were being given away!" Their eyes glowed when they saw the things, and well they might. Never before had they seen anything so fine! How could they resist such temptation?

I myself, being new, had not experienced the unpleasant side of this task, and so when Maria Lvovna positively refused to have anything to do with the distribution of clothes and Sophia Andreyevna asked me to be her assistant I willingly consented. Soon I was to regret it. One day Maria Lvovna and I went to a distant village where we were making ready to open a new dining-room. I took some things, mostly children's clothes, with me. When we got there we separated, each of us canvassing half of the village to make a count of the population. I finished my half first and decided to give some clothes to those most in need of them while I waited for Maria Lvovna. Scarcely had I taken a few things from the sledge and entered the first hut with them when the sledge was surrounded by a crowd. This made it impossible for me to make my selection unobserved and distribute things to those I considered most deserving. The eyes of the crowd were fixed hungrily on my little supply and every face expressed a wild longing to be given something. The men were as greedy as the women and all of them kept telling me what I ought to do. I lost my head, forgot my well-considered intentions, felt myself to be at the mercy of the crowd and stood there in complete puzzlement. At this point Maria Lvovna came to the rescue. She hastily put away all the clothes and we drove off as quickly as possible.

It was a beautiful winter evening, a full moon hung in the sky, but my soul was filled with a gloomy sense of having committed some ghastly mistake. Maria Lvovna appreciated my feelings and was wonderfully tactful. After that I, too, refused to have anything to do with the distribution of clothes, making an exception only when it was absolutely necessary. This necessity did not arise as long as Sophia Andreyevna was with us. She summoned the village tailors, had them cut up all the woollen cloth into peasant coats for the little boys and make them before the winter was over. She herself supervised the cutting, spending day after day in a cold, unheated room. The energy she displayed astonished me. Very soon a great number of little boys were swaggering about in new coats.

A BLIZZARD. GROWING INTIMACY WITH THE TOLSTOIS

When the Tolstois first arrived I avoided Lev Nikolayevich and made no secret of the fact that I did not share his views and convictions. The situation was a bit unusual, for as far as I can remember the only people who came to live and work with them at that time were those who sympathized with his ideas. Another reason why I avoided getting into conversation with him was that I was excessively shy and reserved. I was not in the habit of confiding my thoughts and feelings to anyone.

Once when I was making coffee for Lev Nikolayevich he must have experienced sudden curiosity as to who this close-mouthed little creature working with them was. He began questioning me as to my views. I think he expected to discover that I held the ordinary religious views. I was loath to answer him, but if Lev Nikolayevich once made up his mind to find out something, he was sure to do so. This was my first serious talk with him. When he discovered what my ideas were he smiled cheerfully and remarked:

"I know, I know: a follower of Mikhailovsky, Shelgunov, Timiryazev and the like."

He asked me what I had read. I told him. By that time I had read a great deal of history, philosophy and literature.

"Have you read Kant?" he asked.

"No."

"Or Schopenhauer?"

"No."

"How have you neglected these great minds, these pillars of philosophy?"

I had not read them because they were not popular in the circles in which I moved. Now I realized that this was a serious omission on my part and decided to read whatever Lev Nikolayevich recommended to me as soon as possible.

I had the impression that Tolstoi became more attentive to me after this talk and that made me more shy than ever. Very soon thereafter a small incident occurred that instantly brought us into close relations and attached me to the Tolstoi family for life.

As I have already said, we were in the habit of consulting Tolstoi every morning as to where we were to go. He always told us and named our tasks, often difficult ones. On the day in question he told me to visit several villages along the Rykhotka River, taking me some eighteen versts from home. I had been to nearby villages and so knew the road, but I had not visited distant ones. It was rather cold. I was wearing the fur coat I wore in Moscow (Lev Nikolayevich jokingly called it my kimono), a fur toque and muff. In a word, I would have been warm enough in town, but since the journey ahead of me was a long one and I was going alone, without a driver, Tolstoi's niece threw her cape on top of my coat.

I set off. At first everything went well, but toward evening a wind sprang up. Unaware that the weather was changing, I went on bravely, especially since the going was easy—the wind was with me. There seemed no danger of losing the way for I was following the river. At last I reached a village I had never been to before; it was called Zaborovka and was situated some fifteen versts from our house. By this time the wind was accompanied by snow. Darkness was setting in. I decided I could not fulfil all the tasks assigned me and regretfully made ready to drive home. But when the peasants heard of my intention they were horrified. They assured me it would be difficult, even impossible, to go such a long distance in such weather.

"It'd be criminal to let you go in such a storm and in the teeth of the wind. Stay with us for the night."

I did not want to spend the night in this strange village, especially since I knew they would be anxious about me at home. It was not late, I still had plenty of time. Suddenly I remembered that in the village of Andreyevka, only five versts away, my friend Novoselov was living with Gastev, one of the first young men I had met on arriving at Begichevka. The villagers did not object to my going to Andreyevka since it was so near and in the same direction as the wind. I even thought I could do some of my unfulfilled tasks on the way. But before I had reached the next village a blizzard descended upon me in full force. I found the village, but the tasks before me made me hurry on to the next one. There was a good road, the horse went at a good pace, but positively everything was obliterated by the snow. Being rather short-sighted, I stood up in the sledge to try to get a glimpse of the road. My cape flapped in the wind, frightening the horse, and my hands were frozen stiff, but still I did not suspect the real danger. We seemed to be moving between two white walls, the horse finding the road by instinct. It seemed to be afraid. Once we wandered off the road and found ourselves at a farm-house. There they gave me directions and I set out again. It must have taken us a long time to cover those few versts because it was completely dark when we reached Islenyevo, the village next to Andreyevka. There, too, they tried to persuade me to stay the night, but since my destination was only one and a half versts away it would have been a great pity not to reach it after all my effort. Fortunately the villagers gave me a young boy as guide for I might easily have got lost on that difficult stretch of road in such a blizzard. In this way I reached my destination, still thinking I would return home that night. I had not the least intention of staying in Andreyevka.

I found only Gastev at home. He and Novoselov lived with the blacksmith, a man whose prosperity was indicated by his having an extra room with a wooden floor in his hut, and even possessing a samovar. I was given food and drink and my horse, too, was fed. By that time it was night. To the surprise of my hosts I announced my intention of going home, saying that I knew the road. The blizzard was still raging, but, town dweller that I was, I had no idea of the danger it presented; I was more frightened by the thought of the Tolstois waiting for me at Begichevka. I was sure Sophia Andreyevna would be angry with me for causing them such alarm. And what would they say to my spending the night with Gastev? But the blacksmith would not hear of my going.

"Why, you couldn't ride to the end of the village on a night like this, let alone make a journey of twenty versts!" he said irritably. "It will be a lucky thing for you if the weather permits you to go tomorrow."

There was no help for it—despite my feelings, I had to wait until morning.

The morning turned out to be glorious, and Gastev rode back with me. I was very glad because I felt guilty and was afraid to face Sophia Andreyevna, who so jealously guarded the interests of her family, especially their peace of mind. Then I remembered that she had intended going away and the thought that she might be gone when we arrived somewhat consoled me. In the middle of the way we were overtaken by two sledges. The peasants driving them greeted us joyfully and told us they had been searching for me all night long. The family at Begichevka had sent them, fearing that I had lost the way and would freeze to death. The news upset me terribly.

It appears they were much more alarmed for me than I could have imagined. Used to country life as they were, they understood only too well the perils of my situation. Maria Lvovna told me that Lev Nikolayevich had not slept all night. Yet instead of being angry with me I was met with open arms. "The missing lamb is the dearest of the whole flock!" said Lev Nikolayevich with a happy smile.

It turned out I had been wrong in my estimation of Sophia Andreyevna as well. I had thought she was cold by nature, but she embraced me affectionately and when I said I had expected to have found her gone, she replied:

"How could I have left without knowing what had become of you?"

"What we went through last night has probably cost us a couple of years of life," said Maria Lvovna, but her tone was gentle and without reproach.

After this experience I always felt thoroughly at home in the Tolstoi family.

On the next day Sophia Andreyevna went away. In a letter posted on the road she said she was still heart and soul in Begichevka. As I heard this letter read I realized that Sophia Andreyevna, too, was very dear to me and I came to sympathize with her.

REMOVAL TO TATISHCHEVO

Soon after this it became expedient for me to leave "staff headquarters" as we called the Rayevsky house in Begichevka, which served as the administrative centre of all our work and where the Tolstoi family lived. With the arrival of Tatyana Lvovna there were enough people there without me, whereas workers were needed in other villages of the region to keep an eye on the work of the more remote dining-rooms and open up new ones whenever this was possible. This, happily, was possible all year long, for every post brought us new contributions. We even had money left over for the following year, which was very fortunate in view of the fact that in some districts the harvest failed the following year as well. Tatishchevo, a village only five versts from Begichevka, was chosen as my new place of residence. All the villages along the Rykhotka River as far as Andreyevka were now under my supervision. I was in charge of fourteen dining-rooms. Those in Tatishchevo were opened up by Maria Lvovna (Lev Nikolayevich has described them in his article "Means of Aiding the Population in the Famine Area"). Maria Lvovna knew the people in Tatishchevo well and her purpose in going with me was to help me make their acquaintance and get the work under way.

Tatishchevo was a large village (over a hundred houses) split into two sections, the old and the new.

The church and the houses of the clergy were in the old. Each section had its own dining-room. Usually we opened our dining-rooms in poor men's huts where there were many children so that the owners would be repaid for their labours by having the whole family fed and the hut heated. With these considerations in mind the villagers themselves made the choice of the hut for the dining-room, thus making it clear to me whom they trusted and to whose hut they would willingly go. Once it became necessary to change our quarters because the peasants objected to the untidiness of the owner and the grumbling of his wife.

SITUATION IN OUTLYING VILLAGES

On coming to Begichevka on business or to see Tolstoi I would sometimes be asked to remain a day or two to help with an extra rush of work or to go away on a special commission. In doing so I travelled to all the districts we served, opening new dining-rooms further and further away from headquarters. Once I chanced to visit the dining-rooms run by the Red Cross. This is how it happened: Lev Nikolayevich sent me to dining-rooms in villages located along the Don River without indicating precisely which ones, assuming that I knew. Unaware that some of them were run by the Red Cross, I visited all of them. In the Red Cross centres people complained of the food: they were fed beans and lentils which the peasants were unused to and which made them sick. They begged me to transfer them to our dining-rooms where the food was better and more plentiful.

When spring came an epidemic of typhoid broke out in villages on the outskirts of the regions served by our dining-rooms. As soon as we sent food the epidemic subsided and even came to an end, proving beyond doubt that even such relatively slight assistance saved many lives.

It is impossible to describe what the arrival of food supplies meant to the poor people in villages that seemed to have been abandoned by God and man. I was overwhelmed by their gratitude the first time it fell to my lot to open a dining-room in a famine-struck village. The village was Yekaterinovka. There had been a dreadful typhoid epidemic that was on the wane when I arrived. Many people had died and the population was in a state of despair. They received me as their saviour. The whole village came out to greet me, the women wept and crossed themselves.

"We thought that God Himself had forgotten us," they said. "Every day brought another funeral, even two."

It was with a heavy heart that I left Yekaterinovka. In addition to the decimation caused by the epidemic, the village had become indescribably impoverished. I had to open two dining-rooms there.

On returning to Begichevka I told them about the epidemic, which no one had heard of. I asked Maria Lvovna not to tell Sophia Andreyevna, unwilling to cause her additional worry. But Maria Lvovna could not resist telling her, and as a result Sophia Andreyevna severely reprimanded me not only for risking my own life, but exposing others to risk as well. I, however, did not consider myself guilty since I had not known of the epidemic when I went there.

Lev Nikolayevich observed that wherever we opened dining-rooms the epidemic subsided. In fact the number of typhoid cases in the Ryazan Gubernia was nothing to compare with that in other famine areas.

RETURN TO BEGICHEVKA AND LIFE THERE IN THE WINTER

At that time the local doctor came down with a very bad case of typhoid and nearly died. Yelena Mikhailovna, who was very much attached to him and his family, went to tend him. And so I had to leave Tatishchevo and return to Begichevka to substitute for her. There was very much work and few people at headquarters to do it.

During this period of my life in Begichevka I grew particularly fond of Maria Lvovna. Most of the time only three of us were in the house: Lev Nikolayevich, Maria Lvovna and I. The memory of the few weeks we spent together in intimate contact is one of the most precious memories of my life.

At that time Lev Nikolayevich was engaged in writing his basic work: *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*. He also wrote his well-known letter about karma. As his ideas developed he would confide them to us, two young and inexperienced girls. Often he would be in such an ecstatic mood that the tears welled up in his eyes. In that season of blizzards and snow-storms the outside world held little attraction for us, and we spent our evenings listening breathlessly to Lev Nikolayevich. As soon as he got up in the morning he would take up his pen. Never before had I been in the presence of a genius in the throes of the creative process, and I was so inspired by the ideas that came pouring forth from him that I could think of nothing else. I spent night after night either talking to Maria Lvovna or pondering problems discussed during the day. My mind worked feverishly. I was too reflective by nature to take everything on faith under the influence of Tolstoi's mood. When evening came I would boldly argue with him about matters he had expounded on the preceding day. Never before or after did I find him so gentle and tolerant and deeply understanding. His face radiated a wonderful light. His warm sympathy for and interest in my intellectual searchings encouraged me and enabled me to overcome my usual shyness. Maria Lvovna was not feeling well at the time and though she was always present during our talks, she rarely participated in them. They usually began by my saying, as I poured out the tea, that there were certain points on which I could not agree with Lev Nikolayevich.

"Come, come, that's interesting. What are your objections?"

I would tell him and ask him about things that were not clear to me. As he patiently explained and elaborated, he would be carried deeper and deeper into the subject and my objections seemed to dissolve of their own accord.

How healthy, serene and brimming over with life he was! By that time we had found it possible to relieve him of daily tasks connected with the dining-rooms so that he could devote himself entirely to his writing. His sanguine disposition asserted itself; he smiled more often and sought opportunities to joke and laugh with us.

"Let's have a go at leaping over the banister, Vera Mikhailovna!" he would say all of a sudden, and be the first to jump over the low banister round the stairs.

In the day-time he usually rode horseback despite the snow and cold. But one day I came upon him in the drawing-room looking very downcast and upset. I glanced at him inquiringly without daring to ask him the cause of his dejection.

"How I should like to wake up, Vera Mikhailovna!" he said.

He meant "to wake up" in another world; in other words, to die. I was too taken aback to find anything to say. Soon the cause of his mood become clear: he was disappointed in himself. At that time we had an odd character working in one of our districts. He had appeared unexpectedly, offering vague and confused information about himself, but we sent him to work at one of our centres. Rumours reached us that he drank heavily and sometimes got into rows. All our other volunteers were people devoted to the cause, most of them pupils and followers of Lev Nikolayevich. This man's behaviour was a harsh dissonance breaking in upon the harmony of our entire group. Lev Nikolayevich took it very much to heart. Tolstoi could not bear drunkards. On the day in question the man had turned up at Begichevka and, finding Lev Nikolayevich alone, had sat talking to him with bold and unrestrained familiarity. Lev Nikolayevich found himself unable to overcome his dislike for him, and this, which he considered a shortcoming, weighed heavily upon his mind. He asked me to go and speak to him. I did, and we managed to keep him out of Lev Nikolayevich's sight for the rest of the day.

But in the end we had to break with him. A short time later he again put in an appearance at Begichevka with a bundle in his hand. He smelled of vodka and when he opened the bundle it was found to contain vodka; all his clothes, too, reeked of it. Lev Nikolayevich was beside himself. In great agitation he told the man that he found it painful and undesirable to have him among us any longer.

"I beg you to forgive an old man like me, but I implore you to go away."

When he had gone the even tenor of our lives was restored.

RELATIONS WITH THE PEASANTS

The idea of feeding peasants as an act of charity was against everything Tolstoi and all of us stood for. How could we feed those who themselves raised the food we gave them, and who normally fed us with the products of their labour? Lev Nikolayevich loathed his own position, the position of the holder of a money-bag from which he could give or not as he pleased. "The only correct way of helping the needy," he said, "is to climb down off their backs." Our relations with the population were not normal and Tolstoi suffered from the fawning and insincerity of those whom we helped. Of course he realized that, the relationship being what it was, nothing else could be expected. But he suffered none the less. Wherever he went (and he went everywhere) he was followed by the hateful "your grace." His favourite horse Mukhorty was brought to him from Yasnaya Polyana and he often went for long rides. He rejoiced whenever he was able to travel incognito and hear himself called "grandpa" instead of "your grace." In such a role he loved to talk to other old men, hear their views on life and tell them his own.

One day he returned home in high spirits. He had gone to a distant village where nobody knew him by sight, and when he sought rest in a peasant hut he was taken for one of their own kind and invited to eat from the common bowl. This gave him an opportunity to have a heart-to-heart talk with his hosts. But, as usual, sharing the common bowl had bad consequences for his health.

He also enjoyed talking to little children, and one day he told us a two-year-old little girl had gazed at him with eyes so clear and innocent that it was as if "heaven itself was reflected in them. An older child, even one of five, would not have so pure a gaze."

As was proved later, the people really did appreciate the Tolstois and see in them something more than a mere "money-bag," despite the abnormality of their relations. In the spring, rumours were spread that Tolstoi was to be arrested, and when the expedition of General Annenkov arrived in our district for the purpose of undertaking public works, the peasants concluded they had been sent to arrest Tolstoi. They surrounded the Begichevka house with the determination not to allow anyone to touch him, and Lev Nikolayevich had a hard time convincing them that their fears were unfounded. When the harvest was gathered in the autumn and Lev Nikolayevich took leave of the peasants they showed him such affection that he could not but realize how deeply they had appreciated his labours and solicitude for their welfare.

S. Y. Yelpatyevsky

Sergei Yakovlevich Yelpatyevsky (1854-1933): physician and writer, a frequent contributor to the magazine "Russkoye Bogatstvo"

REMINISCENCES OF LEV NIKOLAYEVICH TOLSTOI

Ten years ago Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoi, who had suffered a series of illnesses during the summer at Yasnaya Polyana, went in late autumn to the southern coast of the Crimea where he lived at Gaspra, the estate of Countess Panina, who placed at his disposal an enormous two-storeyed house set in the midst of a fine park high above the sea.

Soon after his arrival a mutual friend reported to me a statement Tolstoi had made: "We must give Doctor Yelpatyevsky a thousand rubles for Yauzlyar."* This gave me a pretext for making the acquaintance of Lev Nikolayevich.

We found him in bed with a fever. I was struck by his face, even though I had become familiar with it from numerous portraits. He had remarkable eyes, very sharp and penetrating. They were deep-set, glanced out from under great overhanging brows, and seemed to take in the whole man at a glance—seemed to pierce him through and through. Their expression was stern and a bit mocking, and the whole face with its shaggy eyebrows and deep lines furrowing the broad brow was stern and severe. His broad stooping shoulders, long arms and big hands gave him a massive appearance—made him seem bigger than he really was. But the thing that impressed me most was his resemblance to a peasant. The stooping shoulders, the big hands that might have done nothing but hard manual labour, the grey unclipped peasant beard, so unlike a count's, made of him a typical old Russian peasant, harsh and imperious of mien. And I was not the only one who received this impression of him.

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* Some of us in Yalta were preparing to open the Yauzlyar sanatorium for tubercular patients without means, and I had written an appeal for contributions that was published in the *Russkiye Vedomosti.*

Lev Nikolayevich talked a lot and with great vivacity. He laughed contemptuously as he told us an incident a friend had recounted to him in a letter from St. Petersburg. It seems a certain official serving in the provinces (I have forgotten in which town) declared that a miracle had happened to him, and since miracles were then under the supervision of Pobedonostsev, he hastened to inform the latter of it. Whether Pobedonostsev was taken in by it (which is hard to believe, he being so clever and realistic) or whether he had his own reasons for accrediting the miracle, the fact is that he let rumours of it escape and spread throughout St. Petersburg.

The matter was childishly naive. The miracle had to do with sudden promotion (as might be expected) and Lev Nikolayevich made high comedy of the role played by Pobedonostsev. He leaped out of bed, rummaged in a box for the letter, and read to us the most piquant bits.

My real friendship with Tolstoi began some days later. He had recovered by that time and joined me downstairs in the drawing-room where we could be alone.

"What exerted the greatest influence over you in early youth?" he suddenly asked me. "What literature? What books?"

After brief consideration I began to enumerate books and authors: *The Lives of the Saints*, *Kalevala*, Plutarch's *Lives* ... Gogol ... Dickens. ...

"You too loved Dickens?" put in Tolstoi eagerly. "Did you read him in Russian? He's incomparably better in English. He had tremendous influence over me, was my favourite writer. I've read him again and again. Have you?"

I had just finished rereading for I don't know what time *The Pickwick Papers* and told him so. This immediately put him in good humour and he tucked one leg up under him in his favourite pose.

"Which of the characters do you like best?"

"Mr. Pickwick," I replied, "was surely the most charming of them all."

"Of course, of course! And who comes next?"

I was so devoted to all of them that I found it hard to answer, but I said Mr. Weller.

"Sam? I like his father even more. Remember?" and Tolstoi made a frowning face and thrust his hand down, down, into what seemed a bottomless pocket, as he went on: "Remember? First he pulled out a piece of string, then a strap, and only then the money."

I never supposed Tolstoi could laugh so loudly and infectiously.

We recalled the journey of the members of the Pickwick Club in the stage-coach driven by reckless Bob Sawyer. Then with particular delight Lev Nikolayevich spoke of the Christmas spent at the Squire's and of the delightful scene in the kitchen. The remembrance made him jump joyfully out of his chair.

Soon after this, dark days came to Lev Nikolayevich. For two or three weeks death hovered constantly over his bed. Deaf to our warnings and advice, he had gone for long walks and horseback rides in all sorts of weather. The result was this serious illness.

Morning and evening we doctors held consultations, and one of us always spent the night at his bed-side. He submitted meekly to all the treatment we prescribed: compresses, injections, cantharides and medicine.

I felt that his attitude toward medicine was that of most peasants. He, like the peasants, recognized only radical, obvious, "serious" measures. He allowed us to thump him and listen to him as much as we liked even though it was hard for him to lift himself up; he let us take his temperature and apply compresses whenever we chose, but the measure he most approved of was the application of cantharides; he never complained, no matter how often we tortured him with them, and I suspect it was not only because they invariably brought relief, but also because they were a "serious" measure held in high esteem by the peasants. He had the greatest contempt for all sorts of "mixtures," and on this score he and I had our only disagreement.

It fell to my lot to be on duty during the worst night of Tolstoi's illness.

At the evening consultation we had decided, in view of his extreme weakness and feeble pulse (he was kept awake at night by a cough and difficulty in breathing), to support him on stimulants: one hour a camphor injection, the next a table-spoonful of champagne, and the next a spoonful of digitalis mixture, repeating the procedure all night long. When it came time for the digitalis mixture Lev Nikolayevich refused to take it, turning a deaf ear to all my pleadings. I substituted champagne for the digitalis the first time, but later Lev Nikolayevich declared he would not take the digitalis at all. I then pronounced, with all the gentleness I could summon, a sentence I had already composed in my mind:

"Lev Nikolayevich, help me pull you through this illness; don't make my presence here of no consequence."

He answered glumly, evidently very angry and irritated:

"I'll take it . . . if you'll leave the room."

I went out and Tolstoi's son Sergei, who was in the adjoining room with the purpose of relieving me if necessary, saw through the open door that Lev Nikolayevich really did take the digitalis. Nor did he make any further protest, and that was the one and only unpleasantness we had during his entire illness. On the contrary, we were all touched by his thoughtfulness and his unspoken but only too evident gratitude to us for all our trouble.

During this period I was struck most of all by the unceasing activity of his mind, and I feel that it was his illness that gave me an insight into *how* his mind worked all his life. Lev Nikolayevich was well aware of his state, and this made all the more remarkable the incessant, uninterrupted activity of his mind no matter how ill he was. On the day following that dreadful night Lev Nikolayevich took a turn for the better, his temperature fell almost to normal, his pulse strengthened (making it possible to discontinue the stimulants), and I left him in the morning with a light heart and sense of relief. On returning from Yalta that evening I found Maria Lvovna with notebook and pencil in hand, sitting beside his bed writing to his dictation. She explained to me that the dictation consisted partly of new thoughts that had just occurred to him and partly of corrections he wished to insert in a work that had been lying unfinished for some time. In other words, during that dreadful night when his heart almost refused to function his mind had not ceased working for a moment. I observed the same thing several times thereafter—as soon as he felt the least bit better he would send for Maria Lvovna, and this went on until he himself was able to hold a pencil.

Thousands of patients have passed through my hands: some died, others recovered, some were nasty and irritable and resentful of approaching death, others were meek and submissive, accepting the inevitable with typically Russian resignation. But never in my long experience as a doctor have I seen anyone think so hard in the face of death, and think not of his children, or of unsettled affairs, or of matters preying on his conscience, but of general things, abstract things, having nothing to do with his personal life or the lives of those close to him.

And while he resigned himself to us, his doctors, he remained in all other ways as rebellious as he had been all his life, and we often caught a mocking glint in his deep and piercing eyes. One day as I listened to his heartbeats I repeated mechanically to myself: "Good . . . very good . . . excellent." Lev Nikolayevich made no comment, but the next time his temperature took a perilous leap and I again listened to his heart he said:

"Well, Sergei Yakovlevich, how is it? Good? Very good? Excellent?"

Unquestionably Lev Nikolayevich realized how serious his condition was; realized that death was stealing closer and closer to his bed-side. The more his illness progressed and his body weakened, the more serious grew his face and the less he spoke to his doctors and relatives. And the more submissively he accepted our medical services. But at times it seemed to me that he submitted to treatment that was complicated and trying, sometimes even torturing, only out of consideration for those about him, so as to spare his relatives the pain of seeing him refuse aid and his doctors the affront of rejecting the services with which they tried so hard to save his life.

One day his condition was particularly grave, he was in a state of coma, he breathed with difficulty, and there were signs of cyanosis and lung swelling. Five doctors in consultation accepted his condition as practically hopeless; we expected death throes to set in at any moment.

And in this hour of crisis it was rumoured that a representative from the juridical offices had arrived in the near-by town of Miskhor with instructions to seize all of Tolstoi's papers the instant he died, and that a priest in Miskhor had been told to reach the bed-side of the dying Tolstoi by foul means or fair and make a pretence of reconciling him to the Orthodox Church. At the same time an increasing number of suspicious-looking gentlemen with walking-sticks were seen pacing up and down the road in front of Gaspra.

The rumours were so definite and insistent that everyone in the house was thrown into a state of great perturbation. We doctors held a consultation as to what should be done in the event of a forced entrance made by the suspicious-looking gentlemen. The whole house was astir, Tolstoi's papers and letters were collected to prevent their being confiscated and carried away, manuscripts were removed from all pieces of furniture excepting a small cabinet containing his most precious papers that stood in the sick room and in front of the patient's very eyes, so that nothing could be removed from it without his noticing it.

But the danger passed over. Lev Nikolayevich recovered and the birds of prey that had been hovering over his bed folded their wings and crept away.

One day Tolstoi asked me if I knew Kuprin, an author as yet little known but whose story about a circus performer had recently appeared in *Mir Bozhi*. Tolstoi showed interest when I told him Kuprin had been an army officer and briefly outlined the story of his eventful life. I took advantage of the moment to ask Tolstoi to meet Kuprin, who was living in Yalta at the time and had asked me to arrange such a meeting. Lev Nikolayevich willingly consented.

Lev Nikolayevich had a high opinion of Chekhov and one of his favourite Chekhov stories was "Darling." He once asked me what I thought of Chekhov. I replied that I greatly admired his stories but did not like his plays particularly.

"I don't like them at all," said Tolstoi. "Not at all."

And he explained that plays represent a particular form of literature with its own inviolable laws, that a play must be built about a knot, a core, from which all action proceeds and back to which all action flows. This, he said, is lacking in Chekhov's plays.

I said I had not seen all his plays staged, that I had not particularly liked *Uncle Vanya* when I read it but had liked it enormously when I saw it on the stage of the Moscow Art Theatre.

"That's what they told me in Moscow," interrupted Lev Nikolayevich. " 'Be sure to see *Uncle Vanya* on the stage!' I did, and found it worse than ever."

He recovered, and with returning health I got an impression of the true, the well Tolstoi—enormous, complicated, extraordinary. . . . I am not speaking of his ravenous mind, his thirsting conscience, his eternal searchings. I am speaking of his immensity as a human being, and of the extraordinariness of his ordinary human attributes.

Evidently his muscles were ravenous too. It was not enough for him to take an ordinary bathe in the river at Yasnaya Polyana; he had to add to this a series of difficult gymnastic exercises even when he was nearly seventy years old. He could not take the little walk that satisfies most people; his daily portion either on foot or on horseback was fifteen or twenty versts. He grew tired, it seems, if he moved less, and he rested when his muscles worked according to their requirements. I always found him gay and energetic, in a word, "rested," on his return from a long walk or horseback ride.

Unquestionably his mind was ravenous. It was not in his nature and gave him no satisfaction to work or think a little. He had to work hard and think intensely on the matters presented to him in innumerable daily letters, on the constant problems of his soul, on the message he wished to give to people, and on the artistic images, old and new, that were for ever rising before him, that gave him no peace, and that he could not resist even when he considered it harmful, even criminal, to devote his time to them.

Evidently he found exhaustion in idleness and refreshment in work. A satiety of labour invigorated him, and whenever he appeared at the luncheon table vivacious, with springy step and shining eyes, I knew he had worked well that morning, that he had thought intensely and written a lot. Sometimes, in confirmation of my conclusion, he would tell us about the great things he had accomplished that morning. Sometimes, when he engaged in reminiscences or when sizing up a new acquaintance, his talk was quiet and genial. But more often it was a battle, a mustering of all the forces of his mind, a matter of furious attack and defence, more often attack than defence, an effort less to convince his interlocutor of his own ideas than to destroy his opponent's position. If he had no opportunity to rest, that is, to exert himself mentally and emotionally, he would become tired and disgruntled.

On a beautiful, sparkling spring morning we saw Lev Nikolayevich off on a steamer from Yalta. There was the usual bluster of farewell—porters, luggage, bundles, children. He and I left his cabin, which was crowded with relatives and friends who had come to see him off, and went out on deck, where we sat down on a coil of rope in the bow of the boat. Yalta looked particularly beautiful on that bright spring morning.

He asked me about the work I was engaged in at the time—the settling of impecunious tubercular patients in the Crimea—and expressed his sympathy. Suddenly he said: "How old are you?" I replied that I was forty-eight. To my astonishment his face grew serious, even long, he threw me a glance from under his brows that was piercing and—I can find no other word for it—envious—and murmured, turning away: "Forty-eight! The most productive period of my life. I have never worked so well as I did then."

He turned his gaze away from Yalta, sat in silence for some time, and then said, more to himself than to me:

"I wrote *Anna Karenina* then. . . ."

At that moment Kuprin came up to us (it had been agreed that he was to come to the steamer to meet Tolstoi) and Lev Nikolayevich again became kind and gracious. Not wishing to be in the way, I left them alone.

That autumn I went to see Tolstoi at Yasnaya Polyana. He was out for a walk when I arrived, a very long one judging by the length of time I spent waiting for him in the company of his family. Twilight had set in and the lamps were lighted when we heard the door slam downstairs. Someone must have told him of my arrival for he came rushing upstairs two steps at a time and called out "Hullo!" from the stairway.

"Squat down," he said when I met him at the top of the steps. Not understanding what he meant, I stood there in some perplexity.

"Here, like this," and he showed me what he wanted. Imitating him, I squatted down and made a clumsy leap, then Lev Nikolayevich squatted almost to the floor and sprang up lightly, gracefully, with much more ease than I had achieved. I laughed.

"I can't compete with you, Lev Nikolayevich!"

He was highly pleased that he had run up the steps without becoming winded and had squatted lower and leaped higher than I had. I am sure he was more pleased by the compliment I paid him at that moment than he would have been had I complimented him on one of his novels.

N. N. Gusev

Nikolai Nikolayevich Gusev (b. 1882):
Tolstoi's private secretary from 1907 to 1909

LEV TOLSTOI'S DAILY REGIME

From 1907 to 1909, when I lived at Yasnaya Polyana, Lev Nikolayevich usually got up at about eight in the morning and, after making his toilet, went for a walk. This morning walk was not a long one, lasting only a half-hour or an hour. He almost always went alone, and in this brief period of solitary communion with nature he concentrated all his powers on preparing himself for the forthcoming day, so that he could maintain a state of spiritual elevation during his intense creative labours and also in his relations with all the people, be they relatives or strangers, with whom he would come into contact.

On returning from his walk, sometimes even on leaving the house, Lev Nikolayevich would usually be met by the village poor, wayfarers, exiles (going on foot to their place of exile or returning home after serving their term), or professional beggars from Yasnaya Polyana or Tula, and he always gave them coins. Sometimes the exiles told him the sad stories of their lives, and this always depressed him.

As he went through the dining-room Lev Nikolayevich would pick up the mail I had already sorted:

letters, books, manuscripts; of the newspapers, he would ordinarily take only the one he preferred reading at any given time. During the first part of my stay at Yasnaya Polyana it was *Novoye Vremya*, which he later replaced by *Rus*, finding that the latter had two advantages: it printed at the top of the first page the number of death sentences and executions for the day and also a list of the most outstanding events of the day. In the summer of 1908 Lev Nikolayevich began to read *Slovo* and other papers.

On entering his study he had coffee and set about reading his mail. Often on reading a letter which particularly interested or agitated him he would immediately call me and dictate an answer which I took down in shorthand. The rest of his letters he would put aside to be answered later. On some of them he wrote: "For N. N.," which meant I was to answer; on others: "N. A.," meaning "No Answer."

Every morning, sometimes after his walk and sometimes before it, Lev Nikolayevich read the excerpt for the given day from the books *A Cycle of Reading* and *Reading for Every Day* which he himself had compiled and which contained the thoughts of sages of all times and all nations on life's most vital problems. When he had finished with all these tasks, Lev Nikolayevich began to work. During his working hours he required absolute quiet. He closed both doors that led from his study into the dining-room and rarely left his study for any reason. In the two years I spent at Yasnaya Polyana I hardly remember a single instance of his leaving. Nobody ever came to him at this time with the exception of Sophia Andreyevna, who went to bed late and got up late and at about 12 o'clock, when she came into the dining-room for coffee, would, with a rustle of skirts, step into Tolstoi's study to say good morning to him.

Having finished his work at half past one or half past two, Lev Nikolayevich would go into the dining-room for lunch. Often I could see from the expression of his face that he had not yet finished his creative activities. As he ate, chewing his food quickly, his eyes would stare into space as if contemplating things visible to him alone.

After a hasty lunch and a little talk with any visitors who might be present, Lev Nikolayevich would set out for a walk or a ride on horseback. Sophia Andreyevna, anxious about his health, often asked him where he was going. At first he objected to being asked since he himself did not know where he would go: it all depended on the weather, the wind and his inclination. Later, however, he conquered his feeling and, governed by his desire to do what pleased others, would announce beforehand where he was going. Still later one of the domestics, riding at some distance behind him, usually accompanied him on his outings. He disliked having the coachman do it because he disliked accepting the services of any of the domestics; he was very glad when I was the one to fulfil this office, knowing that I had no objections to doing so. I would ride forty or fifty paces behind him and never speak to him, for I realized how he prized these hours of solitude, during which he pondered over his writings. And he in his turn rarely spoke to me, knowing that I did not mind riding in silence. Usually he went to the near-by forest, which played an important role in his creative work. A large part of Tolstoi's life was spent in Yasnaya Polyana. (When he was still a boy he spent one summer in Moscow, but that was the only one not spent in the country.) In his earlier years he would roam the forest all day long with a gun in his hand and a dog at his heels, and at such times his head would fairly swarm with literary ideas and images.

Later he abandoned the gun and the dog but still roamed all the roads and paths of the forest on foot or on the back of his beloved Delir, finding inspiration in communion with nature for new novels, stories, articles, and letters. While riding, sometimes even without stopping his horse, he would take his notebook out of his pocket and jot down ideas that came to him.

On returning home at about five o'clock (his outings usually lasted some three hours) Lev Nikolayevich, very tired, would go to his room for a nap. Dinner was served at six or a little later. Lev Nikolayevich was usually late for dinner, putting in an appearance when the first course was over. I am not aware that he had any favourite dish, nor did I ever hear him speak of food. He seemed to be utterly indifferent to what was set before him and what he was expected to put into his mouth. And I never saw him violate his vegetarian diet. Dinner was generally accompanied by conversation and discussion; often the guests who came to Yasnaya Polyana told the latest news of Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Lev Nikolayevich did not work as intensely in the evening as in the day-time. Either he would sit in his study reading or writing letters, or, if there were visitors, would join the company in the dining-room and take part in the general conversation. He always showed the keenest interest in what was happening in the world, even in its most remote corners, but he rarely trusted the reliability of what he heard. To my surprise I often found on the following day that Lev Nikolayevich had made use of ideas expressed on the preceding evening in a new article. Conversation was always easy and informal. Lev Nikolayevich could not bear to hear people express themselves with dogmatic, doctrinaire insistence, and he himself never assumed the role of mentor or strict moralist. He always spoke his opinion simply and definitely and did not hesitate to couch his disagreement with an interlocutor in sharp terms if he found the latter's opinion too preposterous. To Yasnaya Polyana came people of the most widely different views, from revolutionary-minded workers to representatives of the most Right-wing conservatives. Tolstoi treated all of them the same, did not change his manner of speaking or acting for anyone, tried to be obliging in word and deed to all, but would defend what he considered to be the truth with all the passion of his convictions no matter to whom he was speaking and regardless of accepted opinions and the risk of causing a rupture in his relations with the people he was talking to.

It would be wrong to think that Lev Nikolayevich always sought to indulge in "intellectual" conversation. In most of his portraits and photographs he is shown wearing a grave, even sorrowful expession. But he was not always like that. He loved fun and jollity, eagerly listened to amusing stories, and had a quiet but infectious laugh.

He enjoyed playing chess in the evening, it brought a brief respite to the intense working of his mind. At about half past nine in the evening tea was served and Lev Nikolayevich always came to the dining-room for evening tea even if he had remained away earlier in the evening. The company broke up and went to bed at about eleven o'clock, rarely later. Lev Nikolayevich said good night to everyone, giving his hand to each of the visitors who might be present. There was something special about his handshake: he would hold a person's hand lingeringly and gaze into his eyes with the most amiable expression. It was clear that he truly desired and sought to cultivate an attitude of sincere goodwill towards everyone with whom life brought him in contact.

I. I. Mechnikov

Mechnikov, Ilya Ilyich (1845-1916): eminent Russian zoologist and bacteriologist, director of the Pasteur Institute in Paris

A DAY WITH TOLSTOI IN YASNAYA POLYANA

Early in the morning of a day in spring, 1909, my wife and I arrived in Yasnaya Polyana. As we entered the hall of an old and rather neglected manor house, I saw Lev Nikolayevich coming down the stairs in a white blouse held in by a belt. He gazed fixedly at me with his piercing eyes, and the first thing he said was that I did not resemble the pictures he had seen of me. After a few words of greeting he left us with his children and went upstairs to work, as was his custom. He came downstairs at lunch-time in a good humour and talked cheerily on a number of subjects. He ate special food that had been prepared for him: an egg, milk and vegetarian dishes. After lunch he took a little white wine mixed with water.

At table he intentionally avoided topics that were most important to both of us, keeping them for when we should be alone. The opportunity to be alone came after lunch, when he went to see the Chertkovs, who lived on the adjacent estate, and took me with him in a little one-horse carriage that he drove himself.

Hardly had we passed through the gates when he pronounced a speech he had no doubt prepared in his mind. "I have been wrongly accused of being against science and religion," he began. "Both accusations are unjust. On the contrary, I am a man of deep faith, but I am against the church and the way it distorts true religion. The same thing is true of science. I have the highest opinion of true science, which is deeply concerned with man's happiness and destiny, but I am an enemy of false science that imagines it has made a vastly important and useful contribution to knowledge by discovering the weight of the satellites of Saturn and things of a similar nature."

When he had finished I said that science did not turn a deaf ear to the problems he considered vital, but, on the contrary, strove to solve them. In a few words I outlined for him my own convictions, which are that man is an animal that has inherited certain organizational features causing him much unhappiness. It is these shortcomings that account for the shortness of his life span and the resulting fear of death. When the achievements of science make it possible for man to live out rationally his whole life cycle, the instinctive fear of death will be replaced by just as instinctive a longing for non-existence. When this moment arrives all anxiety about illness, old age and death, and matters associated with them, will vanish and man can give himself more fully and serenely to art and pure science.

After listening to me attentively, Tolstoi remarked that in the long run our views were much the same, but that he took a spiritualistic stand while mine was materialistic. By that time we had reached the Chertkovs' and our conversation naturally took another trend. But no matter what the theme of our talk, it was clear that both of us longed to touch on general problems.

After a number of efforts in this respect Tolstoi began to speak of human injustice, of how insufferable it was that a servant who served his masters the most extravagant dishes at table should himself have to take the leavings and be, on the whole, badly nourished....

Once the talk had turned to such things, it took little to keep it going. All the members of the Chertkov household were strict vegetarians, and they and Tolstoi seized eagerly on a theme dear to their hearts. Lev Nikolayevich expounded on this matter with great animation.

I contributed to the conversation by saying that while I had never fired a single shot in my life and had never hunted any sort of animal, I nevertheless saw nothing wrong in hunting. Animals are rarely given an opportunity to live out their life cycles and apparently feel no need of this; they usually die deaths by violence. As soon as they begin to grow old they fall a natural prey to other animals. Death inflicted by other animals or by various sorts of parasites must be incomparably more painful than the sudden and usually instantaneous death resulting from the sportsman's bullet. If a stop were put to hunting, the number of preying beasts would increase, and this would be to the detriment of man himself....

"Come," protested Tolstoi, "if we put everything to the test of cold logic we would be brought to the most absurd conclusions. Why, we might even find justification for cannibalism."

When, in reply to this, I said that in the Congo, in Central Africa, there were Negro tribes that ate their prisoners of war, and described in detail how it was done, Tolstoi became very much agitated and asked me if those Negroes had any religious concepts. I replied that they observed ancestor worship, that their religion was similar to that of many other savage tribes, and that the cannibals of the Congo were not considered any more vicious or wicked than tribesmen who did not eat their fellows. Explorers in Central Africa assert that cannibalism is the result of tsetse (nagana), a disease so widespread in those parts and so disastrous for animals that it makes the raising of them impossible. That is why, in view of the instinctive demand for meat in their diet, the Negroes resort to the eating of their kind.

Tolstoi was so interested in this matter that he asked me to send him detailed information, and in parting asked my wife to remind me to send it. Soon after returning to Paris I did send him a number of articles about the Congo written by French explorers. . . .

Lev Nikolayevich returned to Yasnaya Polyana on horseback. He mounted easily and galloped away like a young man, seeming almost to be showing off as he boldly jumped a ditch. It was as if he had suddenly grown twenty years younger.

When he and I had climbed the stairs to his study he looked at me fixedly and said:

"Tell me what made you come here."

Somewhat taken aback by the question, I said I had wanted to make clear just what his objections to science were and to express to him the deep regard I felt for his works of fiction, which I considered incomparably superior to his works on philosophical themes. I then gave several examples showing the enormous influence art exerts on life.

"Since you have such a high opinion of my literary efforts I will tell you that at the present moment I am working on a new novel about the recent revolutionary movement in Russia, but I beg you not to tell anybody. I fear it may turn out to be something as feeble as the second part of *Faust*."

When I found places of great artistic beauty in this work of Goethe's old age, Tolstoi expressed his doubt that there could be beauty among so many superfluous scenes. I then told him that, in my opinion, Goethe wished to portray in this part of his tragedy the force of an old man's love, but, fearing to be ridiculous, had clothed his theme in countless veils and added a great many scenes that really were superfluous and kept the reader from getting a unified impression of the whole. Tolstoi seemed interested in my idea and said that in his own literary creations of the last period carnal love played no part, but that he would be sure to reread *Faust*. I promised to send him a copy of my book *Essais optimistes*, in which my ideas on *Faust* are given at length. . . .

When we were leaving, which was quite late in the evening, Lev Nikolayevich said good-bye in a most friendly fashion and declared he would gladly live to be a hundred if by doing so he would oblige me in any way. Scarcely had we climbed into the carriage when he appeared on the balcony and wished us godspeed with a wave of his hand.

D. P. Makovitsky

Dusan Petrovich Makovitsky (1866-1921): a Slovak physician who lived with Tolstoi from 1904 to 1910 as his private doctor

LEV NIKOLAYEVICH'S DEPARTURE FROM YASNAYA POLYANA

As early as 1881 and again in 1896 Lev Nikolayevich had the intention of leaving his family and breaking all ties with his life as a nobleman. This was true in 1909 also, when I was living at Yasnaya Polyana. In 1909 he meant to go abroad, and on several occasions asked me about crossing the border. He likewise made inquiries of sailors and workers who had escaped abroad and later returned to Russia as to how one could leave the country without a passport. He asked me to get information at the border when, in 1909, I went to my home in Slovakia on a visit.

That he was determined to leave home he told me this summer (1910), in the second half of September and one day at the beginning of October when we were out riding. On about the 10th of October he told me he intended taking Ilya Vasilyevich with him. I proposed that I go instead. Some six days before our actual departure, and again three days before it, he told me he was surely going to leave. Six days before it he decided to leave on the following morning, but late in the evening changed his mind. His decision was to leave early in the morning, secretly, and go to his daughter, Tatyana Lvovna, in Kochety.

At three o'clock in the morning of the 28th of October Lev Nikolayevich, in bedroom slippers and dressing-gown and with a candle in his hand, came and woke me up. His face expressed suffering and agitation, but he said in a resolute tone:

"I have decided to go. You are to go with me. I am going upstairs. Join me there, but be careful not to wake up Sophia Andreyevna. We won't take much with us, only the most essential things."

So saying, he went upstairs.

I packed my things and went up to join Lev Nikolayevich, who met me at the door of his room fully dressed and with a candle in his hand.

"I was waiting for you," he said.

From the tone of his voice I could tell he needed me and was distressed by my taking so long. . . . I hurried into his study to pack his things. He himself had packed his linen and a few other things. Presently he came in. He had had no rest that night. He was very nervous. I felt his pulse. The count was 100. What if something should happen?

Lev Nikolayevich was fully dressed and had written a letter to Sophia Andreyevna.

It turned out there were so many things that he had to take his big bag, a thing he had wished to avoid for fear of waking up Sophia Andreyevna. Between Lev Nikolayevich's bedroom and Sophia Andreyevna's there were three doors, which Sophia Andreyevna always opened at night so that she could hear Lev Nikolayevich if he needed her. He closed all three of these doors and procured the big bag without making any noise.

Lev Nikolayevich was in a state of nervousness and alarm. He looked for several other things he needed, such as notebooks, fountain-pen, and ....* book by P. P. Nikolayev, *Conception of God*, which he was reading at the time. Soon he went downstairs and out of the house, making his way hastily to the coachman's lodge, which was at a little distance from the house, so as to wake him up and tell him to harness the horses. It was not yet five o'clock. The morning was so dark that Lev Nikolayevich strayed off the path through the apple orchard and lost his hat. He looked for it for a long time with a pocket torch but did not find it. Bareheaded, he went on to the coachman's lodge, where he woke up Adrian Pavlovich.

When everything was packed we discovered we had a lot of luggage: a big bag, a big bundle, a knee-rug, a basket, a coat. . . . We carried them out to the stable so that we could leave from there rather than from the house, where Sophia Andreyevna might hear us.

The weather was damp, the ground was muddy, we could hardly carry the heavy luggage. Halfway to the stable we met Lev Nikolayevich with the pocket torch. He told us about the loss of his hat. Fortunately I had another cap of his in my pocket. We ploughed through the mud to the stable where the coachman was finishing harnessing the horses. Lev Nikolayevich helped him. He was very anxious to get away. We stowed away the things. Lev Nikolayevich threw an *armyak* over his quilted jacket . . . and we set off for the station in Shchekino. Owing to the mud the coachman suggested the groom should ride ahead of the carriage with a lantern and lead us straight to the highway, but Lev Nikolayevich wanted to go through the village.

Lights were seen in some of the huts. Stoves were being heated. When we reached the end of the village one of the reins came undone. We stopped. I got out, found the end of the rein, gave it to the coachman and took advantage of the opportunity to see that Lev Nikolayevich's legs were properly covered. He shouted at me. Some men came out of near-by huts. When we were out of the village and on the highway Lev Nikolayevich, who had been silent, morose and nervous as we rode, said in a broken voice, as if apologizing, that, unable to bear it any longer, he was leaving Sophia Andreyevna and told me the incident that had served as the "last straw": Sophia Andreyevna had again entered his room, he had been unable to fall asleep and had decided to go away, fearing that otherwise he might insult her, a thing he could never forgive himself.

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* An omission in the original.

He then raised the question as to where we should go. "Where can we go to be far away?" he asked. I suggested going to Bessarabia, to the home of the Moscow worker Gusarov, who was now living with his family on a farm. There, too, was Alexandri. "But it will be a long journey," I added, "not because the distance is so great, but because the trains are so slow and the communication is so bad." Lev Nikolayevich made no reply. He knew and loved the family of Gusarov.

On the way to Shchekino Lev Nikolayevich's head felt cold and I pulled a second cap over the first.

He recalled that the *Utrennaya Zvezda* had published a letter he had written to a priest and the priest's reply. He was surprised that the editors had found the courage to publish them. Very courageous. He would like to see them republished in a newspaper.

We decided that when we reached Shchekino I would find out about trains and whether there was any direct communication with Kozelsk. Lev Nikolayevich said he would travel to Gorbachovo second class and from there third class, suggesting that we should go all the way to Tula and then come back.

On reaching Shchekino it turned out that the train for Tula left in twenty minutes and the one for Gorbachovo in an hour and a half. Lev Nikolayevich entered the station first; I was delayed by looking after the luggage. He immediately asked the man in charge of the buffet if there was a train going directly from Gorbachovo to Kozelsk. He asked the same question in the office of the station-master, forgetting that he had wanted to keep his destination secret. Lev Nikolayevich then asked when the next train would be leaving for Tula and suggested our taking it. His purpose in so doing was, in the first place, to hide our traces (but I knew that in Tula he would surely be recognized, and on the return trip through Zaseka and Shchekino many would find out that Tolstoi was in the train); in the second place he did not want to wait at the station in Shchekino for fear of being overtaken by Sophia Andreyevna. I spoke against going to Tula on the grounds that we would not have time to change trains. I bought tickets for Gorbachovo. I thought of buying them for a different station but I disliked deceit of any sort, and in this case it seemed highly improbable to me that we should be able to keep the whereabouts of Lev Nikolayevich a secret. I repacked our luggage ... and sent back my coat, since it turned out that Lev Nikolayevich had taken several. I did not yet know that we had left Yasnaya Polyana for good; I thought we had gone away for only a few weeks. When the signal of the approach of the train was given Lev Nikolayevich was about four hundred paces from the station taking a stroll with a small boy who was his pupil. I ran over to warn him not to hurry, for the train would wait at the station four minutes.

"The lad is going too," said Lev Nikolayevich.

He got into a separate compartment in the middle of a second-class carriage. I took out a pillow and arranged for him to lie down.

When he was inside and the train started up he seemed to feel relieved, sure that now he was out of reach of Sophia Andreyevna. He remarked happily that everything was well with him. I went out. He remained sitting up. When I glanced into the compartment an hour and a half later he was still sitting up. He asked me to give him *A Cycle of Reading*. It turned out we had not taken it with us; I could find only *Reading for Every Day*.

Lev Nikolayevich was quiet, spoke little and seemed to be worn out. On the previous day we had taken a difficult and exhausting ride on horseback. Just before setting out on it I had spoken to two impoverished village women, victims of a fire, it seems, who were waiting for Tolstoi in the hope of receiving help. When he appeared they showed him affidavits from the volost, but he was in such a state of perturbation that he did not speak to them or give them money, a thing I never remember having happened before.

During our ride on horseback we found ourselves in a young wood on a path running almost parallel with the Likhvin highway. We came to a deep gully with steep sides. A thin layer of snow covered the frozen earth, making the ground slippery. I advised Lev Nikolayevich to dismount and, to my surprise, he took my advice. The descent was so steep I would have led each horse down separately had I not been afraid that while I was taking the first Lev Nikolayevich would take the second (he could not bear to have others do things for him). And so I took both horses at once, the reins of one in my right hand, of the other in my left, stretching out my arms to place a good distance between us in case the horses slipped. In this way I climbed down the side of the gully. As I was leaping across the stream at the bottom, Lev Nikolayevich cried out in alarm, afraid that one of the horses might step on my foot. Then, in a single rush, I took the steep incline on the other side. I waited some time at the top for Lev Nikolayevich who, with the skirts of his coat tucked into his belt, descended cautiously, holding on to trees and bushes. On reaching the stream he sat down to slide down the embankment, crawled over the ice, scrambled up the opposite bank on hands and knees, then began the steep ascent, helping himself by holding on to branches, stopping often to rest and catch his breath. He was very short of breath. I turned away so that he would not hurry. I wished to help him but feared to offer my hand, sure that he would refuse it. When he reached the top and went up to his horse, breathing hard, I urged him to wait a bit before mounting, but he instantly got into the saddle, leaning far forward (a thing he never did, he sat wonderfully erect on his horse), and set out. That day we covered at least sixteen versts. Indeed we had been riding sixteen or eighteen versts every day since we returned from Kochety on September 24. Formerly Lev Nikolayevich rode from eleven to fourteen versts a day, but of late he had been doing more. I attributed this, on the one hand, to the joy he took in the beauties of autumn, and on the other, to his desire to enjoy the freedom of being away from home.

And so Lev Nikolayevich had left Yasnaya Polyana in a state of exhaustion and after a sleepless night. Moreover he had been in a state of tense nervous strain for the past four months. Often his cup of patient endurance overflowed.

When I entered his compartment after leaving him alone for an hour and a half, I found him sitting up, but he had slept a bit. I heated some coffee and we had it together. Lev Nikolayevich said:

"I wonder what Sophia Andreyevna is feeling now. I am sorry for her."

On our last journey to Kochety Lev Nikolayevich had written or dictated in the train. This time he sat lost in thought. Later he spoke of the same things we had talked about in the carriage.

We arrived at Gorbachovo. While we were in the cart Lev Nikolayevich had said we would go from Gorbachovo third class. We had our luggage assigned to the Sukhinichi-Kozelsk train. It turned out to be a goods train with one third-class passenger carriage attached. This carriage was crowded with people, most of them smoking. Because of the crowd some passengers with third-class tickets went into the goods vans.

"How good! What freedom!" said Lev Nikolayevich as he found a place for himself.

I regretted that I had left Yasnaya Polyana without first having a good talk with Lev Nikolayevich. I did not know that he had left for good, I did not know the contents of the letter he had written to Sophia Andreyevna. I supposed he was leaving Sophia Andreyevna for only a month, choosing a place to which she would not come—Shamordino at first (he was not likely to be discovered there) and then some more distant place. Had I known he was leaving for good I would have insisted on his going either to Bessarabia or abroad.

He could not have concealed his whereabouts for long, but in two or three days we might have been abroad. Once there, we would have found a remote spot to which Sophia Andreyevna would not have come.

Our luggage was carried into the carriage and Lev Nikolayevich sat down in the middle of the crowd. Without saying anything to him for fear of earning his disapproval, I went to request that another third-class carriage be coupled to our train in view of the overcrowding of this one. I found the station-master and told him that the carriage was overcrowded and another one should be added to the train, especially since Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoi was among the passengers. He sent me to the master of the Smolensk Station. I repeated my request to him. He referred me to the station attendant on duty. I asked the master to help me find the attendant, which he gladly consented to do. It took us a long time to discover him. He turned out to be in the carriage staring at Lev Nikolayevich, whom the public had recognized by this time. This attendant, however, was not our man; he undertook to find the one who was: the second attendant on duty. He, too, proved to be in the carriage staring at Tolstoi. Again I made my request. With indifference, even reluctance, he instructed one of the railway workmen to tell the chief conductor to have another third-class carriage coupled to the train. All this had to be done without the knowledge of Lev Nikolayevich, who would have objected to having anyone put to trouble for his sake.

Five or six minutes later the engine brought this second carriage to our train. The chief conductor, who came in to inspect tickets, announced its arrival and said there would now be room for everybody (at present people were standing up in the passage and on the outside platforms). But presently the second warning bell was rung, then the third, and the new carriage was not yet coupled to the train. I ran to the attendant to ask what it meant. He said they had not enough carriages. When the train set off the conductor told me the carriage that had been brought up was needed to convey school children.

In all my experience of travelling on Russian railways it had never before been my lot to ride in such a crowded and execrable carriage. The door was placed in such a way that anyone who entered was in danger of banging his head against the corner of a board which, when lifted, formed an upper berth, and when lowered served as the back of a seat. The benches were placed so close together there was little room for people or luggage, and the stuffy air was saturated with tobacco fumes.

I wanted to take out the rug for Lev Nikolayevich to sit on but he would not let me. During this trip he was particularly reluctant to accept services, which at home were a more or less inevitable part of the domestic scene.

Soon Lev Nikolayevich went out on to the front platform. I followed him and begged him to go to the back one. He re-entered the carriage, put on a fur coat and cap and warm galoshes and went out on to the back platform. But here he found five men smoking, so he returned to the front one where there were only three people: a woman with a child and a man. He raised the collar of his coat, opened his shooting stick and sat down. The thermometer showed one or two degrees below zero (Centigrade). In ten minutes I went out to him and asked if he didn't think he had better come inside to get out of the strong wind caused by the movement of the train. He said he did not mind the wind, it was as if he were riding horseback. He went on sitting there for another three-quarters of an hour. Then he came in and lay down on one of the benches. But scarcely had he stretched out when a lot of new passengers entered and a woman with some children took up a position in front of him. He sat up to make room for them, and for the remaining four hours of our journey he sat there or stood out on the front platform.

He got into a conversation with a fifty-year-old peasant from Dudinshchina, who was sitting opposite him. He asked him about his family, his household and the carting business that he engaged in. Lev Nikolayevich asked him in detail about this business ....* he told me about him. The peasant was a talkative fellow, he spoke up boldly about vodka, admitting that they made it themselves; he also said that the peasants had been punished for cutting down trees "over the master's border," and later it had turned out that they were within the peasants' borders. He spoke very scathingly of landowner B., but at this point a land surveyor who was sitting near by intruded in the conversation, giving a different version of the punishments for felling trees and recommending B. as a very kind-hearted gentleman. The peasant stuck to his guns, boldly contradicting the surveyor. The latter was no less insistent.

"We work harder than you peasants do," said the surveyor.

"Oh, but the peasants' work cannot be compared with yours," said Tolstoi.

The peasant loudly confirmed, the surveyor denied Tolstoi's contention. Later the surveyor said to Lev Nikolayevich:

"I knew your brother Sergei Nikolayevich."

Tolstoi began talking to him and he turned out to be a clever, well-read man of liberal and scientific views who enjoyed arguing for the argument's sake.

He turned the topic of conversation from non-resistance and Henry George's single tax theory, to Darwin and education.

When everyone in the carriage had grown quiet to listen to their discussion, Lev Nikolayevich began to speak for the benefit of all. He grew so excited that he stood up, commanding the attention of everyone. People were drawn towards the middle of the carriage from both ends and stood listening in silent absorption.

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* Omission in the original.

Among them were peasants, tradesmen, workers, intellectuals, two Jews and a young girl student who at first listened and jotted down notes, then entered into the discussion, arguing against Lev Nikolayevich in defence of science.

Lev Nikolayevich grew more and more excited. Though his listeners were quiet, it was necessary for him to raise his voice. Several times I wanted to ask him to stop but I could not get a word in edgewise. Arguments came flying towards him from right and left. The discussion went on for over an hour.

Lev Nikolayevich asked to have the door of the carriage opened; then, putting on his coat, he went out on the platform again. The surveyor and the girl student followed him with new arguments on their lips, the girl's all in favour of science; she even held up as example the pocket torch with which Lev Nikolayevich had lighted the floor while looking for a lost mitten. But soon we came to Belev, at which station both of them got out.

Lev Nikolayevich also got out and went into the second-class restaurant for dinner. Here he was recognized by the man in charge of the restaurant and a group of people, evidently local intellectuals, sitting at one of the tables. The man in charge and his assistant were very amiable and attentive to him. A door with a metal strip on the edge which led from the restaurant into the third-class ticket office kept banging, and every time the door was opened Lev Nikolayevich screwed up his face and groaned in painful expectation of the bang.

On re-entering the railway carriage Lev Nikolayevich took his old seat opposite the peasant from Dudinshchina and inquired of him the road to Shamordino and the Optina Hermitage, comparing the relative distances to be covered. On learning that Lev. Nikolayevich was on his way to the Optina Hermitage the peasant said:

"Why don't you become a monk, father? It's high time you gave up the things of this world and saw to the saving of your soul. Remain at the monastery."

Lev Nikolayevich gave him a kindly smile.

A worker at one end of the carriage struck up a lively tune on an accordion and began singing. He sang several songs. Lev Nikolayevich listened with pleasure and praised the performance.

Later Lev Nikolayevich complained of being tired—tired of sitting so long. The train positively crawled along—it took six hours and twenty-five minutes to cover one hundred and five versts (undoubtedly this prolonged railway journey helped to bring about Tolstoi's death).

At ten minutes to five we arrived at Kozelsk. Lev Nikolayevich was the first to get out of the train. When a porter and I brought the luggage into the station Lev Nikolayevich came up to say he had already hired a carriage to take us to the Optina Hermitage, and he led us over to it, he himself carrying one of the baskets to the luggage cart. We were driven in a carriage and pair by a coachman named Fyodor Ilyich Novikov, while behind us came the cart with our things. The road was muddy. When we reached the edge of town the coachmen consulted as to whether they should stick to the road or strike out across the fields. The road was full of dreadful ruts and they decided to go to the left, cutting across the fields outside of Kozelsk. Several times we had to cross ditches. A dark evening set in. The moon shone through clouds. The horses went at a walking pace. Once our coachman took the whip to them and they plunged forward suddenly, making the coach give a dreadful lurch. Lev Nikolayevich groaned. This occurred when we were crossing a deep ditch just before entering upon a bridge. Then we rode beside a wall enclosing the monastery grounds. Here, too, the road was bad and we had, in addition, to keep stooping down to avoid the willow boughs that grew so low that all the new branches had been hacked off. It required two full days of work to clip these trees every year (it would perhaps be more economical to make a new straight and shorter road).

While in the train Lev Nikolayevich had asked his fellow-passengers what hermits were living at the monastery, and now he asked our coachman the same question and told me he intended going and speaking to them. He also asked the coachman where we could put up. The coachman recommended the inn kept by Father Mikhail, saying it was clean.

We waited a long time for the ferry-boat. Lev Nikolayevich exchanged a few words with the monk who acted as ferryman and observed to me that the man was of peasant origin. Red-haired and red-bearded Father Mikhail, the innkeeper, greeted us cordially and showed us into a spacious room with two beds and a wide couch in it. Our things were brought in.

"How pleasant it is here!" said Lev Nikolayevich.

He immediately sat down and began to write. He wrote a rather long letter and a telegram. . . . He himself took them out to coachman Fyodor and asked him to send them off. He also arranged that Fyodor should take us to Shamordino on the following day. Then he had a glass of tea and honey (he ate nothing), asked for an apple to eat in the morning and a glass to stand his fountain-pen in. After that he set about writing in his diary and asked me the date. At ten o'clock he went to bed. Knowing that he was accustomed to sleeping alone in the room I told him I would sleep in a room across the hall.

He did not look very tired. That evening he seemed to be in a particular hurry as he wrote. But during the day he had not made the most of every minute as he usually did. I noticed this particularly. He had not written down his thoughts all day long. Nor did he make the most of his time during the next two days (that is, he did not work as he was accustomed to). I was also struck by the fact that he did not allow anybody to help him (at home he was reluctant to accept services, but on this and succeeding days he utterly refused to). He told me that in the morning he would go for a walk and visit one of the hermits. He told me that Alexandra Ilyinishna* had once lived here and he had visited her several times. He looked for a bootjack but could not find one. I offered to help him take off his boots.

"I want to do everything myself and you keep jumping up," he said. He took them off with difficulty. He also said the less we did for him the easier his life would be, adding:

"I want to live as simply as possible. And to be frugal with my money."

Lev Nikolayevich always tried to pay an honest price for things, even though this price was hard to determine; he disliked paying too little or too much.

Cats out in the hall caused us some disturbance during the night. They jumped about on furniture which was standing against the wall of Lev Nikolayevich's room. Then a woman, whose brother (a monk who kept a shop) had just died, came out into the hall and wailed. Early in the morning she came to beseech Lev Nikolayevich to do something for her fatherless children. In doing so she fell on her knees before him, a thing that always upset Tolstoi.

He left his room a little after six o'clock in the morning of October 29. In the hall he met Alexei Petrovich Sergeyenko, who had come to tell him how Sophia

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* Tolstoi's aunt.

Andreyevna had taken his departure and what conjectures as to his whereabouts had been made after it was discovered for what destination he had taken tickets at the railway station. He also said that, by order of the governor, the police and detectives were to follow Tolstoi's further movements, that the governor had been appealed to for help and by his order the police were looking for Lev Nikolayevich.

A little later Lev Nikolayevich began to dictate to Sergeyenko an article against the death sentence called "Really Effective Means." The concluding words of this last article written by Tolstoi are: "For that reason if we really want to get rid of the error of the death sentence, and, most important of all, if we are in possession of the knowledge that makes this error impossible, then let us spread this knowledge to others regardless of threats, deprivation and suffering, for that is the only effective means of struggle."

Lev Nikolayevich treated Sergeyenko with great consideration.

"Don't you find the atmosphere of the monastery repellent?" Sergeyenko asked him.

"Quite the opposite," replied Lev Nikolayevich.

When asked how he slept, Lev Nikolayevich said, "Badly. My nerves are in a bad state."

Lev Nikolayevich felt calmer at the monastery and would have liked to stay on. He told Sergeyenko he would not go and see the hermits. He went for a walk, leaving Sergeyenko to copy his article, write down the facts about the widow who had appealed to Tolstoi for help and give her a letter to his family asking them to do what they could for her. On leaving the room he said:

"How good it is not to have to hide or lock up anything!"

Lev Nikolayevich walked out to the hermitage. He went as far as the south-west corner, walked the length of the southern wall (so a workman told me, who had it from his friends), then went into the woods.

On returning he talked a while with Sergeyenko before having his coffee. Later he wrote a letter to Alexandra Lvovna* and also, it seems, to Chertkov—perhaps to others as well; I left to drive into the town of Kozelsk. At a little after eleven Lev Nikolayevich again went out to the hermitage. On leaving the inn he turned left, walked as far as the gate, came back and turned right, again went as far as the gate, continued on his way, turned the corner at the tower and went out to the hermitage. Father Pakhom was sweeping the path near the gate of his inn. Having heard that Lev Nikolayevich was in Optina Hermitage, he used the sweeping as a pretext to come outside and see him. He guessed who Lev Nikolayevich was the minute he set eyes on him. He bowed. Lev Nikolayevich returned the bow and went up to him.

"What is this building?" he asked.

"An inn."

"I think I stayed here once. Who is the innkeeper?"

"I am, Father Pakhom, a sinner. And is it you, your grace?"

"It is me, Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoi. I am going to see Father Joseph, the hermit, but I fear to disturb him. They say he is ill."

"Not ill, but weak. Go, your grace, he will receive you."

"Where did you serve in the old days?" asked Lev Nikolayevich, perceiving that this simple ignorant monk had once been a soldier.

Father Pakhom named a Guards regiment in St. Petersburg.

"I know that regiment," said Lev Nikolayevich.

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* Tolstoi's daughter.

"Good-bye, brother. Forgive me for calling you brother; I call all men that now. All of us are brothers of a single father."

With his shooting stick in hand, he turned and went to see Father Joseph.

Later Father Pakhom said ... that Lev Nikolayevich had spoken to him in a very kind and gentle tone and had made a great impression on him.

Lev Nikolayevich went out to the hermitage. On reaching the gate he turned right and entered the woods.

When he returned home he came into my room and told me where he had been.

"I will not go and see the hermits unless they ask me to. If they asked me I would go."

That same morning Lev Nikolayevich told Father Vasily, a monk of his acquaintance, that he had come to Optina Hermitage for a rest and that if he could not make his home there he would go to some other place. On the next day he told his sister Maria Nikolayevna, a nun, that he would be glad to live in the Optina Hermitage and would perform the most rigorous tasks if only he were not made to attend church services.

It seems to me Lev Nikolayevich wished to speak to the hermits not as priests but as hermits, to speak to them about God, the soul and their lives as anchorites, to observe this life and find out the conditions required for entering the monastery. (It is out of the question that, as the churchmen asserted, he was seeking a way out of his position as one excommunicated by the church.)

At one o'clock we had dinner. Lev Nikolayevich found the cabbage soup and buckwheat porridge prepared in the monastery kitchen very tasty and ate large servings of both. On leaving he went to Father Mikhail and said:

"What do I owe you?"

"Whatever you consider just."

"Is three rubles enough?"

"My greatest reward is that a person such as you should have paid us a visit. May I have your photograph?"

"A person such as I? An outcast. I have no photograph with me but I will send you one."

"Be kind enough to sign our guest book."

Lev Nikolayevich did so, adding: "Thank you for your hospitality."

At three o'clock we left for Shamordino. At first Lev Nikolayevich went on foot. That was a custom of his: always to leave a place where he had been a guest on foot.

(At this point the manuscript breaks off.)

THE LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH OF LEV NIKOLAYEVICH TOLSTOI

We consider it our duty to acquaint the world with the gradual development of Lev Nikolayevich's final illness, which we, as physicians, observed to the moment of his death.

As is well known, Lev Nikolayevich left Yasnaya Polyana on October 28. The decision to leave was made after a long and exhausting struggle with his conscience. Except that he felt weak, his physical state was satisfactory. From Yasnaya Polyana Lev Nikolayevich went to Shchekino and from there to Gorbachovo. From there to Kozelsk he travelled in a crowded, stuffy third-class carriage coupled to a goods train. He often went out on to the platform of the carriage to get a breath of fresh air. From Kozelsk he intended to go to see his sister Maria Nikolayevna, who was a nun in the convent at Shamordino, situated some eighteen versts from the railway station, but since the hour of his arrival was late and he was worn out by the journey, he decided to spend the night at the monastery in the Optina Hermitage, five versts from Kozelsk. On the next day, after a night's rest, Lev Nikolayevich went to see his sister in Shamordino, where he spent the night and the entire day of October 30. That evening he complained of feeling somewhat ill and weak, but despite his indisposition and the bad weather ... he set out early in the morning of October 31 in a carriage for Kozelsk (18 versts), from where he took a train for Bogoyavlensk and Rostov-on-Don, on the Ryazan-Urals line. Until noon Lev Nikolayevich felt fairly comfortable, but later he complained of chills. The thermometer showed he had a fever of 38.6°C. Due to his weakness and fever it was decided that he must leave the train at the first big station. This station happened to be Astapovo, where the station-master, Ivan Ivanovich Ozolin, was kind enough to offer him a room in his house a few yards from the station. Lev Nikolayevich felt so bad by this time that it was all he could do to reach the house. Scarcely had he given a few instructions when he was seized by a fit of convulsions affecting the muscles of his left arm and the left side of his face, accompanied by a state of unconsciousness (lasting about one minute). After this he was put to bed. That night his temperature rose to 39.8°C., he began to cough, showed signs of a cold and suffered pains in his legs. His pulse became uneven. . . .*

[November 6.] At about two o'clock in the afternoon he became suddenly animated, sat up in bed and in a loud and clear voice said: "This is the end ... and let it come," then: "But I beg you to remember one thing: there are millions of people in this world besides Lev Tolstoi, and you think only of Lev." This was followed by a sharp decline in the functioning of his heart (collapse): his pulse could hardly be felt; his ears, lips, nose and nails turned blue (cyanosis); his hands and feet grew cold.... From two o'clock in the morning on, despite camphor injections, his pulse was even fainter, became thready. Injections of saline solution brought no improvement. Yet he did not lose consciousness. He reacted to what was said to him and swallowed water that was offered him. In view of his critical state his family was sent for. After five o'clock in the morning there were intervals in the pulse-beats and his breathing was superficial. At five minutes after 6 o'clock in the morning (Moscow time) Lev Nikolayevich died quietly, without suffering, surrounded by his wife, children and friends.

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* This is followed by a detailed daily bulletin of Tolstoi's health.

As we have already said, Lev Nikolayevich lay in the house of the station-master I. I. Ozolin where two large rooms were placed at his disposal. The hygienic conditions were satisfactory.... Several times his daughter Tatyana Lvovna Sukhotina and his son Sergei Lvovich went to his bed-side. The other members of his family were close at hand all the time but did not enter his room: acting on the advice of the physicians, a family council decided that no other relatives should go in to see Lev Nikolayevich since there was every reason to believe this might excite him and, in his critical state, have fatal results.

The immediate cause of Tolstoi's death was a rapid decline in the functioning of his heart. During other serious illnesses he had experienced a similar weakening of his heart action, but his strong constitution and exceptional moral strength had enabled him to win the struggle for life. This gave us reason to hope that this time, too, Lev Nikolayevich's strong constitution, even though old, would be able to win the battle with the infection. However, in our opinion the moral suffering he had been enduring and the exhaustion caused by his difficult journey had weakened his heart and nervous system to such an extent that the illness immediately took a serious form that led to a fatal ending.

The kindness and gentleness that Lev Nikolayevich displayed throughout his illness will never be forgotten by those whose good fortune it was to serve him in his last hours.

D. P. Makovitsky
D. V. Nikitin
G. M. Berkenheim

Yasnaya Polyana, November 9, 1910

V. G. Chertkov

Vladimir Grigoryevich Chertkov (1854-1936): one of Tolstoi's closest friends and the publisher of his works

THE LAST DAYS OF L. N. TOLSTOI

On November 1, 1910, at three o'clock in the afternoon, I received the following wire from Lev Nikolayevich sent from Astapovo: "Fell ill yesterday. Passengers saw me leave train in weak condition. Fear discovery. Better today. Will continue journey. Take measures. Sorry. Nikolayev." ("Nikolayev" was the pseudonym we had agreed upon.)

I left Tula by the first train that night and arrived in Astapovo at 9 o'clock in the morning of November 2. I was met by the local station-master, Ivan Ivanovich Ozolin, who turned out to be a very kind and generous man, deeply devoted to Tolstoi. At first he placed two rooms of his house at his disposal, then the entire house, finding other quarters for himself, his wife and children. He led me to his house where I found Lev Nikolayevich in bed, extremely weak but fully conscious.

He was very glad to see me and held out his hand, which I took and kissed gently. Tears came to his eyes and he immediately asked how my family was.

As we talked he began to have trouble breathing. He groaned and said, "It's better when I faint: feel nothing, wake up and everything is fine." Evidently he was suffering greatly.

Soon he began to speak of what seemed to be uppermost on his mind at the moment. With great vehemence he said everything must be done to keep Sophia Andreyevna from coming to him. Several times he asked me in great agitation what her intentions were. When I told him she had declared she would not attempt to see him against his will, he seemed greatly relieved and spoke no more of his apprehensions the rest of that day.

He asked me about Goldenweiser, about his daughter Tatyana Sukhotina, and about what was going on in Yasnaya Polyana. I tried to make my replies as soothing as possible. Among other things he said, "I received a nice letter from Sergei. He has taken a firm stand in support of my leaving home. . . ."

At about five o'clock of the same day Lev Nikolayevich, probably with the desire of taking his mind off the thoughts that were troubling him, asked me to read him the papers. I picked up a paper lying near by, opened it and began reading somebody's version of the reason why Tolstoi had left Yasnaya Polyana. In this connection I told Lev Nikolayevich that in reply to the many letters I had received from all over the country I had sent a letter to the newspapers about his leaving. He was greatly interested in my letter, which, however, had not been published in the number at hand. My young friend Alexei Sergeyenko, who had accompanied me to Astapovo, was in the next room and overheard our conversation. He brought me a copy of my letter and I began reading it to Tolstoi. At one point we were interrupted by somebody's entering. When the person left I was about to resume reading the newspaper, but Tolstoi asked about the letter. "Is that all?" he said. "No, there's more." "Then read it." He listened to the end with strained attention. When I finished and glanced up I saw he was crying. "Splendid," he said with deep feeling. Then I read him a few of the notices about him which the papers were full of at that time. At first he seemed interested but soon asked me to stop reading this matter (as I was sure he would, knowing how he disapproved of the enormous importance attributed to him as an individual) and turn to the political news. I read a few leading articles to him. He lay quietly, probably listening with only half an ear, giving himself up mechanically to the thoughts read to him, finding in them a brief respite from the intense labour of his own mind. . . .

On the next day, November 3, Lev Nikolayevich asked me how publication of the revised edition of his *Cycle of Reading* was getting on. It had been held up for some time, partly because of objections raised by the censor. He also asked me if by any chance I happened to have the manuscript of his article on socialism, which he had written for a group of Czechs interested in this question, and which had become lost in his hasty departure from Yasnaya Polyana. Unfortunately I did not have it. Later I read the following entry in his journal: "My article on socialism is lost. Too bad. No, not too bad." (After the death of Lev Nikolayevich the manuscript was found on one of the tables in his study in Yasnaya Polyana.)

The doctors asked me to try to get Lev Nikolayevich to take some food. When I spoke to him about it he said, "I have no desire to eat and it is my opinion that if one doesn't want to, one ought not to. . . ."

That day Lev Nikolayevich showed particular animation. He was even excitedly talkative. He told me with satisfaction that his temperature had fallen. When, after a thorough examination, his doctors went into the other room, he said to me with some heat that doctors busied themselves with trifles—bacteria and the like. "What they ought to attend to," he went on, raising his voice, "is improving hygienic conditions." Seeing that he was becoming excited, I stopped him and said he shouldn't talk much now and could tell me the rest later. I retired behind a screen.

In a little while he called me and said, "I should like to make a certain request of you, but if you find it unpleasant, please don't hesitate to say so." Evidently seeing that I was taken aback by this introduction he hastened to add with a smile: "Don't be frightened," and then asked me how I thought he ought to answer Moody, the English translator of his novel *Resurrection*, who had offered to send Lev Nikolayevich 500 rubles of the royalties he had received from the book to be used in aid of the peasants of Yasnaya Polyana.... Knowing that Lev Nikolayevich was eager to use this money to build a granary for the benefit of the local peasants, I told him I thought he ought to accept it with gratitude. Lev Nikolayevich was overjoyed and said, "Then do be so good as to answer Moody to that effect in my name." After a moment's pause he began to dictate the letter in English: " 'On my way to the place where I wished to be alone I was. . .' you know what I want to say . . ." "Taken ill?" I put in. "Yes, yes, that's it. Please write the letter."

A little later he asked me if I had seen Tanya (Tatyana, his eldest daughter), who, he had learned from Dr. Makovitsky, was already in Astapovo. "I want to ask her how Sophia Andreyevna is," he said. "How could Tanya have left Yasnaya Polyana? No doubt she told Sophia Andreyevna she was going home and came here instead."

"I'm in a maudlin mood today," he said to me. And as a matter of fact, when I told him how touched I was by the expressions of love and esteem his illness had called forth on every hand, he wept. Again I left him and withdrew behind the screen. When I returned to his bed-side a little later I found him wiping the tears from his eyes.

In the afternoon Lev Nikolayevich sent for Tatyana Lvovna. I was moved to see how overjoyed he was to be with his eldest daughter and to hear with what warm solicitude he inquired about Sophia Andreyevna. He supposed Sophia Andreyevna was in Yasnaya Polyana when really she was living in a railway carriage at the Astapovo Station, only a few yards away. Tatyana Lvovna did not wish to upset her father by telling him where her mother was. For that reason, when she found his questions hard to answer she said it would be better not to discuss the matter at present and that she would tell him everything as soon as he felt stronger. Lev Nikolayevich, unable to understand the cause of such reticence, said, "But you know how important it is for me, for my peace of mind, to know this." And again he wept. There was nothing for Tatyana Lvovna to do but excuse herself hastily and go out. Throughout this interview, which I was present at, Lev Nikolayevich said not a word that might have suggested he cared to see Sophia Andreyevna.

On that same day, when we were alone, Lev Nikolayevich told me in a whisper that on the table lay his pocket notebook in which he wrote his secret, private diary at one end and jotted down notes to be transferred to his big journal at the other. He asked me to remove the pages of his private diary (it was a loose-leaf notebook) and put them away with pages already removed. The ideas jotted down in the other end of the book were to be copied into his journal. Then he asked me to bring him his big journal and he began to write in it. I undertook at the same time to carry out his request regarding his private diary.

Lev Nikolayevich was still able to take two or three steps about the room if supported on either side. But when he sat down he was too weak to hold up his head and I remember how touchingly he thanked me on one occasion when I supported his head with my hand. It was necessary to hold him as we led him back to the bed and then put him in it, gently lifting his legs and wrapping them in the blanket. One day when we had just concluded this operation, in which two doctors and I participated, Lev Nikolayevich murmured weakly as he lay back panting from the exertion: "Think of the peasants, think of the peasants! What a hard time *they* have dying!" And his eyes filled with tears. When the doctors went out of the room I said, "Were you thinking of the sick and dying peasants you visited in the village not long ago?" (I had in mind the scenes he describes in his *Three Days in a Village*.) "Yes, yes," he said through his tears. "And now it appears I must die in my sins." "No, Lev Nikolayevich," I said, "now you are surrounded by love rather than sin. You have done all that was in your power to free yourself of sin."

It was typical of him and deeply moving that as long as the least spark of consciousness remained alive in him he was tortured by shame and pangs of conscience because of the material comfort and advantages he enjoyed and which, as he never forgot, the millions of labouring people who created this luxury were deprived of.

On the day before his death his daughter Tatyana Lvovna, weeping and in a state of great agitation, came from his bed-side into the room where we were resting and said: "Put down these words of his—he just said to me in a clear voice: 'There is only one thing I would say to you: remember that there are millions and millions of people on this earth besides Lev Tolstoi, and you look only to him.' "

On November 5, at half past two in the morning I was waked up. As I leaped out of bed, pulled on a jacket and slipped my feet into slippers, I heard him talking loudly and excitedly in his room, which was the third from mine. I hurried in to him and found him sitting sideways in bed. I went up to him and he said he wanted to dictate. I took out my notebook. He was about to express his thoughts but asked me first to read him what he had already dictated. I explained that I had just come in and had not yet had time to take down anything. Then he asked me to read what Dr. Semyonovsky had taken down. The latter, who was sitting beside the bed, gave me a meaning look and held his notebook up to me to show that nothing was written in it. Only then did I realize that Lev Nikolayevich was delirious. He demanded again that I read what Semyonovsky had written. At that moment Semyonovsky rose cautiously and went out of the room.

Lev Nikolayevich: Be so good as to read it.

I: He hasn't written anything, Lev Nikolayevich. Tell me what it is you want to say.

Lev Nikolayevich (more insistently): No, first read me what has gone before. Why don't you want to read it?

I: But nothing has been written.

Lev Nikolayevich (reproachfully): How strange! Such a kind man, and yet you refuse to read it to me.

This went on for some time, until Tolstoi's daughter advised me to read something from the book lying on the table. It happened to be *A Cycle of Reading*, which Tolstoi always kept beside him, never omitting to read the chapter for the day. I found the material for November 5. As soon as I began to read Lev Nikolayevich became perfectly still, concentrating all his attention on what he heard, asking me from time to time to repeat a word he had missed. And not once did he interrupt for the purpose of dictating his own thoughts. "Who wrote that?" he inquired once or twice in reference to some idea from the *Cycle of Reading*. When at last I stopped, fearing that he was fatigued, he waited a while to make sure I did not intend to go on, and then said, "Well, then..." and was about to begin dictating. To prevent his becoming excited again I hastened to go on with the reading, to which he again listened submissively. This was repeated a second time. After prolonged reading, I gradually let my voice grow softer and softer until it faded away altogether, and he himself seemed to be worn out, for he only said, "Very good," and grew perfectly quiet.

This incident brought out with particular clarity two of Lev Nikolayevich's most outstanding traits. One was his literary habits, which made it essential for him to share with others the workings of his mind; he had become so used to doing this that even when he was too ill to write himself he insisted on dictating his thoughts. The other was his tendency to take the greatest interest in and show the greatest respect for other people's ideas. All his life he devoted much of his time not only to putting down his own ideas for the benefit of others, but also to acquainting himself with the thoughts and inner experiences of others, either by talking to them or by reading their works. He was always learning from them.

Did Lev Nikolayevich, during this last illness, realize the possibility of his dying? And if he did, how did he take it?

Lev Nikolayevich was constantly aware of the imminence of death; throughout the last period of his life he kept saying that he was on the threshold of death. Every time he fell ill he was inclined to think it was his last illness. Therefore we have every reason to believe that this time, too, he contemplated death and was ready for it. This is confirmed by certain words and phrases he uttered during his illness. For example, he several times emphatically declared: "Well, this is the end, everything's over" and "It's all over and I don't regret it." Once, half delirious, he said jocularly, "The game's up. Mustn't complain." During this last illness he accepted the idea of death with the same complacency, the same wise resignation that had been characteristic of him ever since, thirty years earlier, he had embraced a religious view of life. When we were alone a few days before his death he told me calmly that he would probably die this time. He said it in a tone of satisfaction and with tears of peace and happiness in his eyes rather than of fear and suffering. One night as I sat at his bed-side he fixed upon me a tender gaze. I said, "See, Lev Nikolayevich, you are feeling a little better today." He murmured something in reply which I could not make out, but which, judging by the childlike tone of his voice and the tears of bliss that shone in his eyes, had reference to approaching death rather than to recovery, and he spoke of this with the most serene and elevated feelings. Another time, waking from a long sleep, his eyes met mine and he smiled tenderly.

"I'm in a bad way. The fever doesn't abate," he said.

"That sometimes happens. The disease must run its course," I replied.

"You think so?" he said with interest, and again fell asleep.

However, I did notice some difference between his attitude towards death this time and other times when he was seriously ill. On former occasions he had either desired death or been indifferent. This time, while accepting the possibility of death with complete tranquillity, I felt he did not wish to die.

It is not difficult to understand why this was so. . . .

He had just taken a momentous step leading him into an entirely new way of life, where he would be independent and live among the simple labouring folk whom he so much admired, sharing their humble lot and mixing with them freely. He was filled with a multitude of ideas for new works of literature and was as happy as a child at the prospect of being able to live at last in complete harmony with his moral convictions. And suddenly, at this very moment, he was cut down by illness. It was only natural that at first he should have looked upon it as a barrier lying across the path he was determined under any circumstances to take. (At first he did not wish to remain at Astapovo, he insisted on pressing forward in spite of his illness.) In such circumstances, diametrically opposite to those in which he had fallen ill on former occasions, he could not wish to die; on the contrary, he wished to live and realize his plans for a new way of life.

But it is just as true that on realizing the seriousness of his condition he easily reconciled himself to this unforeseen thwarting of his heart's desire.

"So this is what has come of my plan," he wrote in his diary with shaking hand on November 3. "*Fais ce que doit, adv....** All is for the best, for others and especially for me." With these wonderful words the diary of Lev Tolstoi comes to an end.

The intensity of Lev Nikolayevich's spiritual life during those last days, despite the physical sufferings he endured, is shown by the remarks he made from time to time. For instance, during the last twenty-four hours of his life he said, "Well, and this is good too...", "All is so simple and good", "It is well ... yes, yes ..." and things of a similar nature. And these remarks were made at moments when his raucous breathing, hiccuping and groans would lead one to think his physical suffering was too great to allow him to think freely, let alone enjoy a sense of well-being and even bliss.

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* "*Fais ce que doit, advienne que pourra*"—a French saying: "Do what you ought, let come what may."

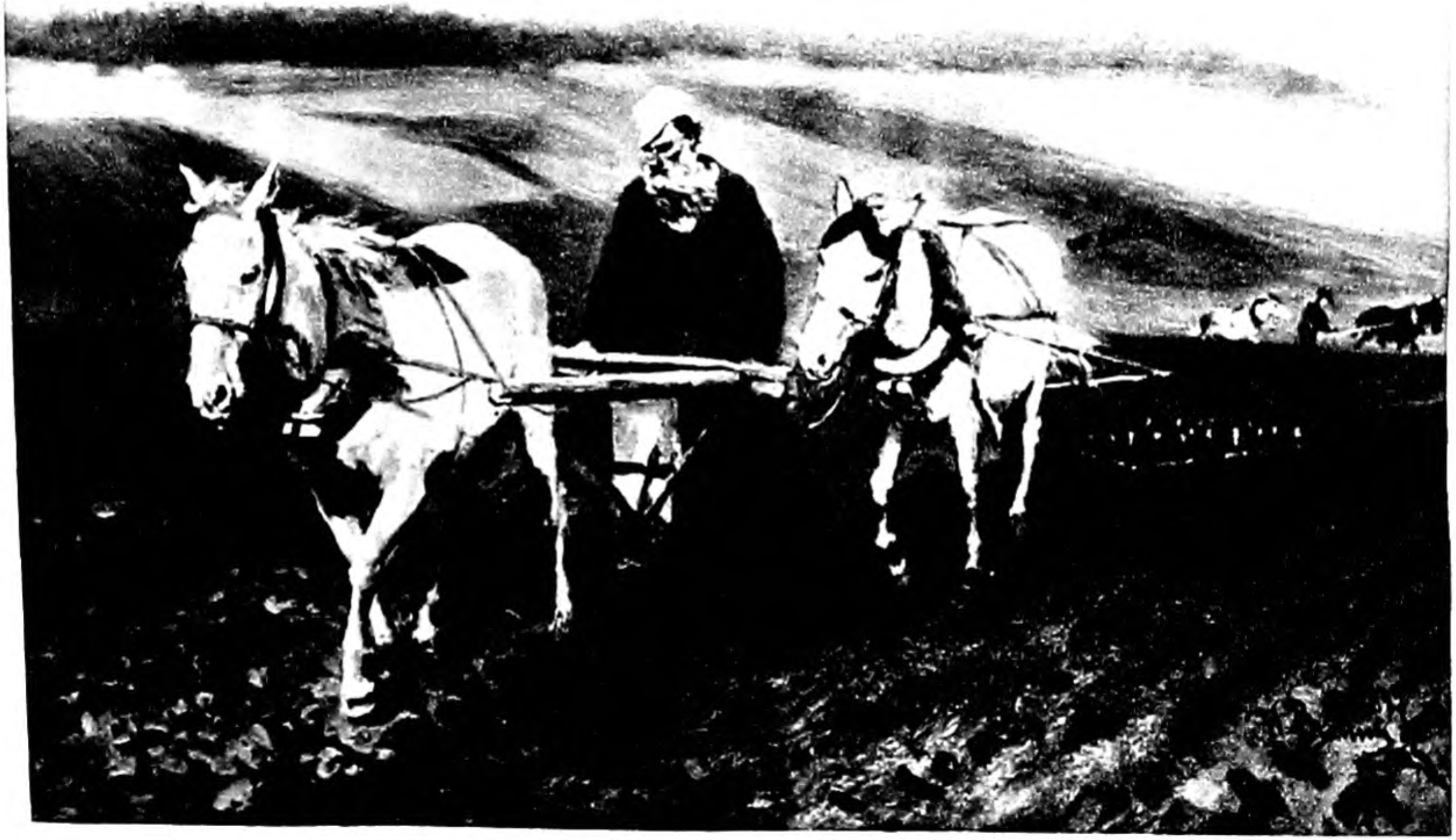
Judging by the fact that, up to the last hours of his life, as he lay motionless on his back with closed eyes, breathing with difficulty, Lev Nikolayevich, to the wonder of his doctors, showed signs of consciousness, as when he pushed away the hand of the doctor who intended giving him an injection, or when he turned away from a light held up to his face—judging by these signs we may suppose that in these last hours and minutes he was preparing himself for "the great change," was living through the immediate anticipation of death, which he had longed to experience.

The actual death of Lev Nikolayevich came so quietly and peacefully that I found it beautifully consoling.

After endless hours of difficult breathing, he suddenly breathed lightly and easily. In a few minutes this faint breathing stopped. A moment of complete silence. No struggle, no violence. Then came a profoundly deep, scarcely audible sigh—the last.

As I gazed upon this shell that had once encased the soul of Lev Nikolayevich, I recalled a few words reflecting the process going on within him which I had happened to hear on the preceding evening. I had been sitting alone at his bed-side. He was lying on his back breathing with difficulty. Suddenly he said in a loud voice, as if summarizing for himself the thoughts that had been going through his mind: "All of me . . . my manifestation . . . enough of it . . . that's all."

Lev Tolstoi and Ilya Repin at Yasnaya Polyana, 1908



Lev Tolstoi ploughing. An oil painting by Ilya Repin, 1887

WRITERS, ACTORS, ARTISTS

I. N. Kramskoi

Ivan Nikolayevich Kramskoi (1837-87):
well-known Russian artist

LETTERS TO P. M. TRETYAKOV*

1

Kozlovka-Zaseka, September 5, 1873

Count Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoi has come. I have seen him and am to begin his portrait tomorrow. I shall not describe my interview with him, for that would take too long. We talked for more than two hours. I returned to the question of the portrait four times, and all to no avail. None of my pleas or arguments had any effect on him. Finally I began to make all kinds of concessions, and went to the utmost extremes. One of my last arguments was: "My respect for the reasons which keep your grace from sitting to me prevents me from insisting any longer; I shall, of course, have to relinquish all hope of ever doing your portrait, and yet—your portrait should and will hang in the gallery." "How so?" "Why, very simply. To be sure, I shall not be the one to do it, and none of my contemporaries either, but in thirty, forty or fifty years it will be painted, and then it will be a cause for regret that it was not done by a contemporary." He thought it over, but still refused, though with hesitation. To clinch our talk, I again began to make concessions and presented the following terms, to which he agreed: first, the portrait was to be painted, but if for any reason it did not please him, it was to be destroyed; then, the time when it was to be sent to your gallery would depend on him, although the portrait was to be your property. This last condition was so generous that he was even taken aback and had to accept it. Then it appeared from our subsequent conversation that he would like to have a portrait for his children, but did not know how to arrange it; he asked about making a copy and whose consent was required if it was to be made later, that is—the copy, which he felt should also be sent to you. To forestall the possibility of his beating a retreat, I made haste to explain that an exact copy was out of the question and could not be executed even by the same artist, and that the only solution was to do two portraits from life; it would depend on him which he would keep for himself and which would be sent to you. At that we parted, having decided to begin sittings tomorrow, that is, Thursday.

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* Famous collector of Russian paintings, founder of the Tretyakov Gallery.

2

Kozlovka-Zaseka, September 15, 1873

Now that I have started work on the portrait and have come to know the count better, I see that he feels obliged not to impose his choice upon me. That is clear from everything that has passed between us. For instance, after his third sitting, he and his wife expressed satisfaction with the portrait; the next time I came with another canvas and started another, larger portrait, allowing the first to dry. When that portrait was under way, the countess said to me, "It could not be better!"

The count agreed and added that his conscience would not permit him to keep the better one for himself. I said nothing and bade my time, confining myself to the remark that both portraits should be so good as to make preference difficult. Then I resumed my work on the first. The count doubted that it would come up to the second. But I went on working, and yesterday the results were so satisfactory that it was adjudged by all to be better than the second.

V. G. Korolenko

Vladimir Galaktionovich Korolenko (1853-1921): one of the best-known Russian writers of the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries

THE GREAT PILGRIM

(Three Encounters with L. N. Tolstoi)

I met Lev Nikolayevich only three times during his life. The first time was in 1886, the second in 1902, and the third—three months before his death. In other words, I met him at the beginning of the last period of his life, when Tolstoi, the great writer, author of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, had become an anarchist, the prophet of a new faith and the repudiator of force as a means of combating evil; I then met him "at the cross-roads," so to speak, when his doubts led him to the brink of denying all he had discovered and propagated, including anarchism and non-resistance. On the third occasion I spoke to the great seeker of truth at the very end of his life's journey, and again I heard from his lips things that were new, unexpected and puzzling.

Thus, constantly doubting, ceaselessly pressing forward, he suddenly stepped off the pathway and into the unknown, whose mysteries he had spent a lifetime in trying to comprehend and relate to this earthly life of ours.

These three encounters are as deeply and vividly engraved in my memory as if they had occurred only recently. In reality they are separated from one another by periods first of fifteen years, then of seven.

And when I look back upon them it is as if I stood gazing down the long stretch of life's pathway crowded with all sorts of impressions—big and little, clear and hazy, important and unimportant—and suddenly in three places the fog of life lifts, and in each of the clear spaces there arises the figure of a great and extraordinary man. A man striding fearlessly and energetically towards some goal. Each of the impressions is different, as different as three different photographs, but in the end they merge to form the image of one great personality.

This is because they really were three different photographs. As life changed, Tolstoi changed, and so did I; the background, the object of focus and the negative were different every time.

My purpose here is to fix these impressions. But I do not wish to throw them together in such a way that each new impression distorts and changes the preceding one. In describing these three encounters I shall do all in my power to reproduce the impression each made upon me at the time. I was such-and-such a person. Tolstoi appeared to me to be such-and-such a person. And if in doing so I show myself to disadvantage, I willingly make the sacrifice. Tolstoi himself was never afraid to face the truth. We lesser mortals can and must follow Tolstoi in this, as well as in the honesty with which he accepted all the phenomena of life. Even if a phenomenon happens to be so formidable in size as that which bears the name of LEV TOLSTOI.

And this brings me to the story of how I met Tolstoi three times, what impression I got of him each time, what thoughts and feelings he inspired in me, what I rejected in him and what aroused my awe and wonder.

In 1885 I returned from the Yakutsk Region, settled in Nizhny Novgorod and began to write, occasionally making trips to Moscow. In Moscow lived Mme. Dmokhovskaya, mother of a political exile who died in 1881 in a Siberian jail. Her daughter was the wife of K., another political exile. During my stay in Irkutsk I had made the acquaintance of both of these men and had even become great friends with Dmokhovsky not long before his death. On hearing of this his poor mother, who had met my wife, wished to meet me as well. This was arranged, and after that my wife and I called on her occasionally. Tolstoi, too, was a frequent visitor at her house.

One day she said she had told Tolstoi about me. A certain event which took place in my life* might have justified the assumption that I sympathized with Tolstoi's ideas. Tolstoi became interested in me and said to Dmokhovskaya:

"I think I understand Korolenko. If he cares to seek my help in settling his doubts and problems I would be only too glad to see and talk to him."

I had already begun to write but was not yet a writer in the true sense of the word: that is, a person interested primarily in his observations. Certainly I would have been glad to meet Tolstoi, but on learning why he had asked me to come and what he expected of me, I shrank from doing so, feeling more acutely than ever the shyness I was a prey to. I decided not to go, convinced that I would be acting a lie if I did. I dared not look upon Tolstoi as merely an object for observation, and at the same time I was not troubled by the sort of doubts I could honestly ask him to help me disperse. I could meet him only to argue with him. I had never

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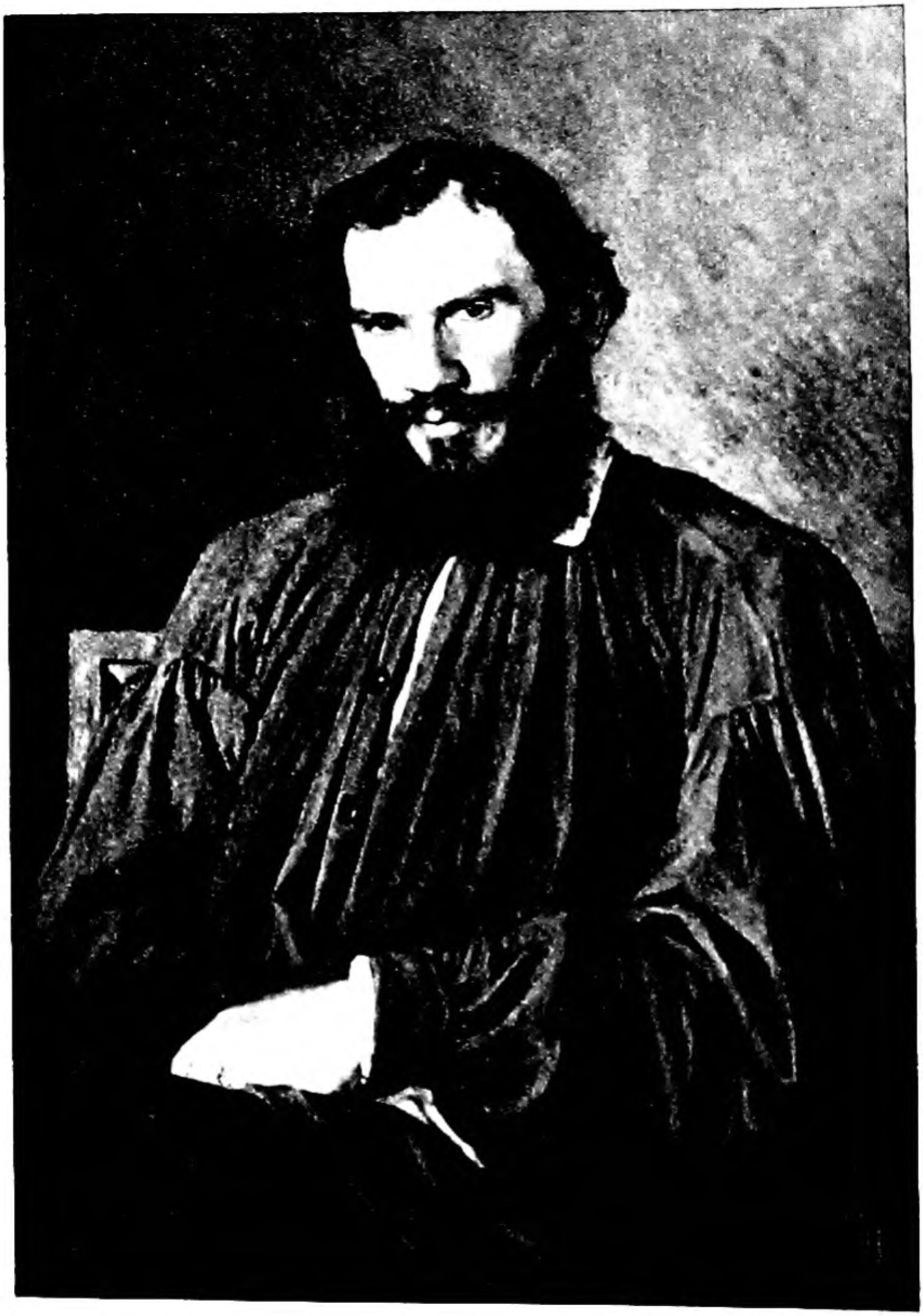
* In 1886 Korolenko had refused to take the oath of allegiance to Alexander III, for which he was exiled to Yakutia.



Portrait of Lev Tolstoi by Ivan Kramskoi, 1873 (This portrait hangs in the Tolstoi home, now a museum, at Yasnaya Polyana.)

been a terrorist, but the necessity of offering resistance seemed to me so patent and pressing that I could not listen calmly to a denial of it. And yet the great admiration I felt for him as a writer made the very idea of my arguing with him impossible.

Many stories were circulated about Tolstoi at that time, and in the mood I was then in, the following one left a particularly bad impression on me. Through this same Mme. Dmokhovskaya, it seems, Tolstoi had made the acquaintance of Mme. Uspenskaya, widow of an exile who had died while serving his term on the Kara. The poor woman was weak, ill and worn out by the struggle to set her only son up in the world. She lived in close quarters, without a servant, carrying wood and water, doing all the cooking and scrubbing herself. When they met, Tolstoi looked at her, shook his head and said in touching tones: "What a fortunate woman you are! The work you do is genuine, you have no need to invent means of occupying yourself!"

This remark was quoted sarcastically and disapprovingly by Moscow intellectuals.

Another story was circulated as proof of the universality of his theory of non-resistance. One day as he was walking down the street a sledge driven by a muzhik passed him by. A little boy attempted to jump on the runners of the sledge but his foot got caught in a strap. Noticing this, the muzhik whipped up his horse and the frightened boy hopped on one foot trying to keep up with the sledge. Was not this a situation requiring that an observer throw himself at the horse's head and stop it by force? "My old instincts were aroused," Tolstoi is said to have remarked. "I was about to leap into the street and seize the horse by the bridle, when the problem was solved without my intervention: the boy fell down, his foot slipped out of the strap and the muzhik rode off."

These stories, which swarmed like gnats about the head of Tolstoi the prophet, painted him as a self-satisfied fanatic who had turned his back on this world and was painstakingly stopping up all the chinks in his hastily erected shrine to keep out all sounds of the intense, harrowing, bewildering struggle going on outside. I myself had come to a crucial moment in my life: having rejected many of the dogmas I had formerly embraced, I was in search of new formulas. But Tolstoi's solution seemed to me too simple, too easy and convenient. And what I took to be the prophet's own satisfaction with his solution went against my grain.

So I resolved not to approach the great artist who denounced art, the great thinker who denounced science, the seeker of the truth who complacently accepted a pseudo-Christian quietism.

Several months went by. One day, on arriving in Moscow, I found the literary circle grouped about Goltsev and the magazine *Russkaya Mysl* inspired with the idea of putting out a collection of articles dedicated to a particular occasion. The articles were to draw people's attention to some abuse or other and to voice a public protest. An editorial board was appointed consisting of Goltsev, Prugavin, Zlatovratsky and me. At one of our sittings we decided to ask Lev Tolstoi to contribute to the collection, and Zlatovratsky and I were entrusted with this task.

Now I had a definite purpose in going to see Tolstoi and need no longer fear that I would be acting a lie in doing so. My mind was made up.

If my memory does not fail me, it was on an autumn evening that Nikolai Zlatovratsky and I set out for Khamovnichesky Street, and it was with irrepressible excitement that, on invitation of the footman who had announced our presence, I climbed the stairs leading to the upper floor. My companion, too, seemed to be unnerved. *Russkaya Mysl* had recently published a story by Zlatovratsky called "My Visions" in which he had drawn a portrait of "the great sage" who was able to do away with all doubt. The story, told as it were by a son of the people, was full of bitter remorse and fierce discontent: the son of the people cursed all evidences of culture he had come in contact with and tended to adopt Tolstoi's denunciation of enlightenment. I recognized the influence of Tolstoi in the story and found it unwholesome and demoralizing.

I scarcely remember the inside of the house in Khamovnichesky Street, which I visited only once. This, perhaps, was due to the fact that all of my attention was immediately centred on a tall man with a greying beard whom we found standing on the top landing of the stairs surrounded by a group of people. Directly in front of him was a spare man of middle height, slightly stooped, bald, and with two strands of grey hair falling over his temples. He had round eyes and an aquiline nose. His pale attractive face wore a candid look and his eyes were like those of a dove. As we approached the group the tall man with the beard and wearing a Russian blouse saluted Zlatovratsky (they had met before), and when I mentioned my name he took my hand and held it while he continued, or rather concluded, the speech he was addressing to the man with the round blue eyes:

"Oh, yes, I have really found the truth, and it answers all questions for me—big ones and little ones—utterly and completely. Here" (tugging at my hand), "this is Korolenko. He was in Siberia, and...."

He recounted episodes from my wanderings in exile that must have appealed to him particularly.

"And now you see he has come to me. And I know why he has come, and what he needs, and what he wants to ask me."

I felt myself blushing to the roots of my hair. It turned out that I had not escaped what I had hoped to escape after all, and my coming really did take on a false aspect. How was I to tell this enormous man whose very appearance was enough to intimidate me, this man whom I revered as the author of *War and Peace*, that he was greatly mistaken, that I did not harbour within me the thoughts he chose to read in my heart, that I was here merely to carry out a task entrusted to me in reference to the compiling of a collection that might never see the light of day.

"Well, let's go into my study," said Tolstoi, changing his tone and taking me lightly by the arm. We all followed him.

"You are a lucky person, Vladimir Galaktionovich," Tolstoi said to me on the way. Noting my surprise and the questioning glance I gave him, he hastened to explain: "You were in Siberia, in prison, in exile. Again and again I have prayed for the opportunity to suffer for my convictions but God does not see fit to give me that happiness."

Tolstoi's study was a comparatively large but low room, approached, as I remember it, by two or three steps. I wondered as we entered whether the floor had not been raised intentionally to make this room lower than the others. I do not remember how it was furnished, I only remember seeing books and papers everywhere and a cobbler's last lying in one corner. The room was crowded with people.

Besides Zlatovratsky and the old man with the round eyes who turned out to be the famous artist Nikolai Nikolayevich Ghe, I remember seeing Ghe's son (also Nikolai), Vladimir Orlov and M. Ozmidov. I have only a vague and indistinct recollection of the rest of the people.

I was slightly acquainted with Orlov. He had been a member of the Nechayev political circle in the old days, had gone through most of the philosophical phases of a Russian intellectual, and, through nihilism, had arrived at a peculiar religious creed resembling the deification of humanity. On a previous evening I had seen him among the guests at Zlatovratsky's. We were talking about the apathy and confused state of mind of the youth in those days (the eighties). A few young men were gathered round a lively, broad-shouldered man of middle height with restless dark eyes and a shock of curly hair. I could not hear what they were talking about, but all of us turned to them in surprise when suddenly the curly-haired man leaped to his feet, noisily overturning his chair, threw back his shoulders, and with flashing eyes cried in a loud voice to his interlocutors:

"You have no god? You do not know whom to bow down to? Bow down to me! I am god!"

Filled with curiosity, I went over and joined the group. The young men stared wide-eyed at this new revelation of deity, evidently perplexed by the phenomenon, and the curly-haired man, his eyes still flashing, went on speaking quickly, ardently, incomprehensibly. He seemed to be angry. Undoubtedly he was fervent, but not profound. His flame died down as suddenly as it had sprung up; his eyes alone went on burning with pointless wrath.

To my inquiries Zlatovratsky replied that Orlov was a fine, even an outstanding person in his way, and that he had recently written a story called "Drunken Night" which could not be printed because of the censor, but showed remarkable strength and talent. Now, it seems, he had embraced Tolstoi's ideas. Lev Nikolayevich went to see him at Butyrskaya where he lived a poverty-stricken but philosophical life, supporting his large family on chance earnings. Whenever he visited him, Tolstoi the artist would feast his eyes on his surroundings, on the ragged neglected children, and would repeat over and over as he sat in the midst of the squalor:

"What a fine life you lead! How I envy you!"

One other of the guests left a deep impression on my mind—Ozmidov, who occupied himself with making copies of Lev Nikolayevich's religious writings. He had formerly been employed by one of the subsidized railways, and on leaving had been awarded a considerable sum of money which he had invested in a dairy-farm near Moscow. The venture had soon turned out to be a failure and when I met him at Tolstoi's house he was making copies of and selling the new "Gospel" and "What I Believe In."

Orlov in his grim way, Ozmidov in his cautious way, both seized on the first opportunity to comment on Tolstoi's new teaching.

Hanging on the walls and lying on the chairs of the study were pages from an album of Ghe's illustrations to Tolstoi's short stories. As he showed us the pictures Lev Nikolayevich praised them highly, saying that they exactly coincided with his own ideas, adding:

"I want to find a publisher for two such albums, the first to be more expensive—for the rich; the old man hasn't even got a decent pair of trousers. We've got to buy him some new trousers. And the second to be a cheap edition, for the masses."

At that point an argument broke out at the other end of the room. Orlov and Ozmidov were arguing with Zlatovratsky.

"Literature, too, is prostitution," Orlov shouted just as fiercely as he had declared himself to be a god on that other occasion. "None of you are better than fallen women. You sell your most intimate thoughts and finest feelings for money."

"Yes, yes," put in Ozmidov. "Prostitution, that's what it is. Selling the things most sacred to the soul for money. Seen from the point of view of Tolstoi's teachings. . . ."

Zlatovratsky would have voiced an objection, but he was drowned out by another stream of denunciations. Orlov's eyes were flashing like lightning.

"Once you choose that path," he remarked caustically, "you will soon find yourself writing as a certain Ostap plays on his absurd *bandura*."

Aware that this dart was aimed at me,* I wanted to find out Tolstoi's view of the matter.

"Allow me to put in a word," I said, going over to them. "Is it true that you consider it shameful to receive money for a work of literature?"

"Yes, shameful!" cried Orlov sharply, and Ozmidov added in the tone of a pedant elaborating a well-known formula:

"By selling his works, a writer (that is, if he is a serious writer) allows his thoughts and feelings to be evaluated by their weight in metal. If he is just a hack he is not worth talking about. From the point of view of true Christianity, that is, from the point of view propounded by Lev Nikolayevich in his latest works. . . ."

"But," said I in some perplexity, "we have just heard Lev Nikolayevich propose publishing Ghe's album of pictures and selling it for money."

"Oh, that's quite another thing," said Ozmidov.

"Why is it? Do not the pictures of an artist propounding some definite idea express his highest thoughts and feelings?"

Ozmidov did not give in. He launched upon a glib, trite, doctrinal speech that made me want to stop my ears. One felt he was prepared to argue on any theme at all with cold, insincere demagogy. Everyone showed signs of uneasiness. Lev Nikolayevich seemed to be aware of this, for in the midst of Ozmidov's loud tirade his quiet voice was suddenly heard, saying:

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* Ostap is a character from Korolenko's "Murmuring Forest."

"No, that is not quite the case. It seems to me Korolenko is right."

The conversation took another turn. Zlatovratsky, somewhat nervous and excited, called attention to the main problems connected with the idea of non-resistance. Everyone listened to him attentively. He turned to Tolstoi, but. . . .

(At this point the manuscript breaks off.)

Lev Tolstoi and Anton Chekhov at Gaspra, 1901

Lev Tolstoi and Maxim Gorky at Yasnaya Polyana, 1901

P. I. Chaikovsky

Pyotr Ilyich Chaikovsky (1840-93): the great Russian composer

EXTRACTS FROM A DIARY

July 1, 1886. When first I made the acquaintance of Tolstoi I was seized by fear and embarrassment. I fancied that in a single glance he would penetrate the secrets of my inmost soul. I was sure it would be impossible to hide from him all the evil lying at the bottom of my heart. Like a doctor examining a wound and knowing the most sensitive spots, he would avoid touching them if he was kind (and he must be kind), but in so doing he would give me to understand that he knew everything; if he was ruthless he would deliberately poke his finger into the sorest spot. I feared either possibility. But he did neither the one nor the other.

In his relations with people this most penetrating of writers turned out to be simple, direct and sincere, without any of that "all-knowingness" I had so feared. He made no effort to *avoid* hurting a person, but he did not intentionally wound him. It was clear that he did not see in me a "specimen" to be studied, that he merely wanted to chat with me about music, which he was so interested in at the time.

...Perhaps never before in my life had my composer's pride been gratified as it was when I saw the tears rolling down Tolstoi's face as he sat beside me listening to the *andante* of my first quartet.

Ilya Repin

Ilya Repin (1844-1930): the most famous Russian painter of the "peredvizhniki" school, which flourished at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries

COUNT LEV NIKOLAYEVICH TOLSTOI

(Personal Impressions and Reminiscences)

1

In the summer-time at Yasnaya Polyana Lev Nikolayevich gets up at ten or half past in the morning. After washing, he dons a black blouse and has tea and coffee with his wife. He drinks a great deal and without hurrying. If the weather is fine, breakfast is served out of doors, in a garden surrounded by acacias and shaded by a spreading lime-tree; if it is raining, the countess awaits her husband in the drawing-room.

When he has had his tea and a pair of soft-boiled eggs, Lev Nikolayevich goes downstairs to his small study, whose walls are lined with rough shelves filled with books, and devotes himself to mental labour.

He works with great concentration until three o'clock or even later, at the end of which time he goes out to work in the fields, if there is any such work. The count works only for the benefit of the poor and weak, of widows and orphans. If there is no work of this sort, Lev Nikolayevich takes a basket and goes to the woods for mushrooms. This provides him with hours in which to be alone with nature and himself.

Occasionally he spends these hours from three to six with a guest. Strangers and friends come to see him from the remotest corners of Russia and from abroad to consult him on the most varied problems.

His earnest talks and sympathetic response bestow comfort and enlightenment and convey a knowledge of profound truths.

By six o'clock Lev Nikolayevich returns to have dinner with his large family, consisting of ten children of various ages (beginning with his 2-year-old youngest and ending with his 26-year-old eldest son). To the number sitting about the dinner-table must be added nephews and nieces, friends, tutors, governesses and guests of the count and countess. The big white hall of the old house, hung with portraits of ancestors, is cleft from end to end by an enormous table, and during dinner the room is filled with loud, cheery talk on all sorts of topics by people of all ages.

After dinner Lev Nikolayevich goes through the great pile of mail delivered from Tula consisting of letters, magazines, leaflets and correspondence from all over the world. He is aided in this laborious task by his eldest daughter Tatyana, who often writes answers to his letters according to his instructions.

At about nine o'clock in the evening the whole family (with the exception of the little ones, who are dispatched to bed) again gather in the dining-room for tea and fruit and for the evening's entertainment. Sometimes this is supplied by reading aloud, which is usually done by Lev Nikolayevich himself. He reads exceptionally well: simply, expressively, and in a manner that invariably holds the attention. At other times it is singing, in which case Lev Nikolayevich plays the accompaniment, following the singer with great care. Or again it is instrumental music: a young student of the Moscow Conservatoire who has come to teach Tolstoi's children plays the violin and Tolstoi's eldest son the piano. More often than not they play Beethoven; usually very well, and always with the enthusiasm which is to be found only among amateurs.

Lev Nikolayevich is very fond of music, has an excellent knowledge of it, enriches the performance with interesting comments, and frequently is moved to tears by some passage. After listening to an impressive sonata, he is apt to relate a dramatic story created by his imagination under the influence of the music.

The young folk—Lev Nikolayevich's own children and his nieces and nephews—sometimes imitate a Gypsy chorus, singing to the accompaniment of guitars. They give a good imitation of the impassioned Gypsy style, the piercing cries, the sudden pianissimo, the long-drawn heart-rending notes. Particularly skilful at this is Maria, Tolstoi's second-eldest daughter, a vegetarian, a strict adherent of her father's theories, a tireless labourer in the fields side by side with peasant women. Maria is a tall, slender, fair-haired girl with a typically Russian face.

After twelve the family separates for the night.

2

Lev Nikolayevich gives himself completely and wholeheartedly to whatever he is doing. I myself have seen how hard and long he works in the fields. From one o'clock until dusk (half past eight in the evening) I once saw him plod up and down, up and down a widow's field, a horse in front of him pulling the plough he guided, a horse behind him (tied to him by a strap) pulling a harrow. Sweat was streaming off his brow and the rough blouse he wore was soaked through and through, and yet he did not slacken his efforts for a moment. The ground was uneven: now he had to climb a hill, now descend it, being careful not to let the plough slip down and injure the horse's hind legs. In a hollow at the bottom of the field lay a bottle of white wine mixed with water wrapped up in the count's coat to protect it from the sun; from time to time the sweating ploughman would take a hasty drink directly from the bottle and hurry back to his work.

Often as he climbed the hill his pale face, with the hair plastered to his wet forehead, temples and cheeks, expressed great tension and fatigue, but as he came abreast of me he would always throw me a bright and cheery glance and a jesting word. At last I asked him to let me try my hand at the plough. He gave me necessary instructions and I set out. At first it seemed easy, but soon, unable to hold the plough at an even depth and at the same time keep the furrows straight and control the pace of the horse, I began to make crooked furrows and let the plough dig now deep into the soil, now just on the surface, and it was only by a great effort of will that I forced myself to climb the hill a second time before returning the plough to its owner. Unused to this form of labour, I was all in a sweat and completely worn out; true, it was a hot day—the 9th of August.

Remembering the sketch-book in my pocket, I took it out and made two sketches of the count ploughing, taking advantage of the moment when he passed by.

Late in the evening he at last finished the second sector of the widow's holdings. Mist was rising from the hollow and I was afraid Lev Nikolayevich would catch cold. He pulled his coat on over his wet blouse and we set out for home.

Lev Nikolayevich was in a happy frame of mind, his voice was full of spiritual elation without a shade of sentimentality. "I can't understand," said he, "why people should deprive themselves of the most blissful state and the happiest hours of their lives—those spent in labouring in the fields. The field labourer finds his reward in the knowledge that his work has brought unquestionable benefit, in the pleasant fatigue he experiences, in a good appetite and sound sleep."

His voice was unusually deep and moving. He made many interesting comments on the emptiness and triviality of life in towns, on its vain bustle and false values, and on the moral and physical degeneration of town dwellers.

By this time it was quite dark, the road could not be seen, and it was only by the light of a myriad of stars in a fathomless sky that we could detect the ruts and pitfalls underfoot. We were both in a thoroughly happy, even blissful mood, although my role might be compared to that of a fly on the horns of an ox hitched to a plough.

But on reaching the house the countess somewhat damped our spirits. And well might she, for the whole family, including the guests, had been waiting for us since half past seven and it was now nine o'clock. Hungry children and a cooling dinner are hard things for a mother and hostess to put up with; but the main thing was that the countess could not forget that Lev Nikolayevich had just recovered from a serious illness which had been caused by over-indulgence in hard work in the fields such as he had been guilty of today.

The doctor absolutely forbade his taking such big doses of physical labour. What the youthful Tolstoi easily coped with, now threatened to entail serious suffering. His wife was right.

A few words should be said about the countess. A tall, stout, handsome woman with black eyes brimming with energy, she was always busy, always engaged in some undertaking. The management of their estate was a very big and complicated task, and it rested entirely upon her shoulders. She carried on all negotiations with publishers about her husband's works, read all his proofs, kept all the accounts. She herself made her children's clothes and the simple apparel Lev Nikolayevich wore. He made his own boots. The countess was always gay and cheerful and never complained of overwork. I once saw her spending her leisure time in quilting a jacket for one of the house servants who was now in her dotage. I could hardly believe my eyes on seeing the handsome countess, no longer young, bending over the stuff spread out in the dining-room for hours on end, working harder than most women of poor families.

The countess is gifted with a quick, practical mind and a keen eye. During the painting of Lev Nikolayevich's portrait, nobody offered such valuable criticism as she did—quickly, on the spur of the moment, without the least pretension.

On the occasions when I voiced my admiration of the aptness of her remarks she said regretfully that formerly, when Lev Nikolayevich had been engaged in writing fiction, he had listened to her criticism, but that now, when he was devoting himself solely to philosophy, he avoided her and did not confide in her. "It's my opinion that he's got into the wrong field," she said impatiently.

In all matters concerning the family and the estate Lev Nikolayevich consults her and loves and appreciates her as a true and devoted friend. He himself had washed his hands of the estate. He is an extremely kind and patient father and his children love him dearly.

3

When talking with Lev Nikolayevich one is always impressed by his depth and sincerity; a listener, thrown into a state of transport by his ardour and strength of conviction, inevitably succumbs to his ideas. Two or three days later, when one's mind begins to work independently, one often perceives that it is impossible to agree with him on many questions, that ideas which at the time seemed so clear and irrefutable, now seem preposterous and untenable, that certain of his theories lead to conclusions just the opposite of those he draws. But under the spell of his powerful speech such thoughts do not enter one's mind.

I lived not far from Lev Nikolayevich in Moscow, and often when the day's work was over I would join him for his evening walk.

Oblivious of the streets we were passing through, unmindful of fatigue, he and I covered great distances. And all the while he went on talking to me in his interesting way. Sometimes we went so far and became so tired that we would at last take a horse-car. But that did not mean he stopped talking. How many profound ideas, apt observations and eternal truths he voiced! The subjects of our conversations covered everything: everyday life, politics, literature and art.

The remarks he would make while standing in front of a picture I had just begun were extraordinary for the penetration they evinced. He would suddenly throw new light upon my undertaking, or suggest the adding of details at the most vital spots that would lend a marvellous new life to the whole composition. One was aware of the fire of genius in him. He exerted the same influence over my friend, the artist Surikov, who lived next door to me. We both took inspiration from his comments on our work.

One day at Yasnaya Polyana we met a barefooted muzhik who was on his way to ask Lev Nikolayevich for help; he was in need of seeds for sowing.

"You'll be given them," said Lev Nikolayevich simply. "I'll leave word. Come back in an hour and the steward will give them to you."

The muzhik thanked him listlessly, with a little nod, then turned and plodded back on bare feet.

"That," said Lev Nikolayevich, "is Trofim. When winter comes he'll set off begging."

"Will he really?" I asked. "Can't anything be done to help him?"

"Why should you be so astonished?" said Lev Nikolayevich serenely. "There is nothing dreadful in that for a peasant. This winter he and his family will feed themselves by begging, in the spring they will begin working again, and in the autumn, God willing, the harvest will put them on their feet. He has suffered many misfortunes: his cow died and his horse was stolen, but the most serious misfortune was that his wife was ill for a long time, and she has always been his mainstay. He himself is a weak, miserable sort, but his wife is strong, she's the one who has kept them going."

"But I have always thought begging was demoralizing and led people to become lazy," I said.

"Oh, not at all; you're speaking like a townsman. 'There's no escaping jail and begging,' as the saying goes. Begging, that's hitting the bottom for a drowning peasant. He hits it, stands on it, strikes off with his feet and again comes to the surface. Have no fear, he'll recover, go to work and scrape along for another spell. There's nothing new in it. It throws the common man into a peculiar moral state. It humbles him, makes him withdraw into himself and repent of many of his errors; at such a time all his mental and spiritual faculties are mobilized, and this is an excellent remedy for weakness of will and inactivity. And believe it or not, there is a certain sweetness that comes with humility—a sort of a lyrical mood of the spirit, and it elevates the common man."

Yes, poverty is one of life's greatest teachers.

I seemed to perceive the profound moral aspect of peasant life. Through humility, labour and application a family which has descended to a state of beggary rises again to a state of prosperity. But on pondering the matter later I began to wonder if Lev Nikolayevich were not just stingy and reluctant to give of his own.

One evening at twilight I set out to find the count, who was making hay. I asked one of the peasants to show me to where he was at work, and on the way I asked him about the members of the Tolstoi family, if they came to the aid of peasants who were in need.

"They do. Sin on my soul if I did not say so. No father ever did more for his own sons," said the man gravely. "There is nothing they refuse us. Two years ago there was a big fire, half the village was burnt down; the count built new houses for everybody and gave each family 25 rubles besides. All those, that is, as were burnt to the ground, as everybody in the village knows who."

And the countess does good too. They all do, there's no denying that. Lev Nikolayevich often goes to the village to see the sick (and also the well). One day I accompanied him. We took a medical student, who was in his last year at the Moscow University, with us. This young man, a follower of Tolstoi, spent his summer working beside the peasants in the field for the same pay as an ordinary haymaker. At the time I am speaking of he was just about to return to the university to go on with his studies. He covered the three hundred versts to Moscow on foot. At first the other haymakers looked at him suspiciously, considering him to be a clerk or a steward who had been given the sack, but after he had healed a few patients they began to treat him with great respect. At last they came to love him for his mild disposition, and accepted him as a doctor. On the day in question he examined an old woman who had inflammation of the intestines and gave advice and medicine to others.

The Tolstois have their own store of medicines. Sometimes the count's daughters administer to the sick, taking them food and medicine.

The visits we paid to the well were more cheerful. On returning from the fields in the evening the peasants were in a gay mood. They jested unceremoniously with the count, their master, and before they knew it were guided into a discussion of the books Lev Nikolayevich kept them supplied with, and of problems of the soul and morality. All of these peasants could read and write, having been taught to do so here at Yasnaya Polyana by the count. And they were well informed as to the moral problems to which he gave so much of his time and attention.

At twilight we went to see an old man who had a great thirst for learning. He was sitting among beehives holding a book up to the fading light. As soon as he saw Lev Nikolayevich he spoke to him quickly and gladly, in a bookish sort of language. "I'm engaged in reading the biography of the artist Ivanov," he said, and launched on a tirade against the injustice suffered by men of talent in the hard, bureaucratic, intriguing city of St. Petersburg. Lev Nikolayevich interrupted him by saying:

"Has the young lady gone away?"

"Yes, she's gone. We gave her a better send-off than we'd give our own mothers."

"What sort is she?" asked Lev Nikolayevich.

"A good sort; the very best sort, so to speak. Judge for yourself, your grace: we went off to the fields, she stayed behind and took care of the little ones, begging your pardon; did everything—fed them and heated the samovar, and had everything ready by the time we came back from the fields. Never was such a young lady! And gave us good books to read. This I'm reading is an old *Russky Vestnik* of 1862. But there's nothing else to read. Would you be likely to have something new, your grace?"

Lev Nikolayevich promised to send him something.

The young woman in question was one of the many who had become converted to Tolstoi's views. During the summer his followers would go to the village to help the peasant women who had no one to leave in charge of their homes. They would take care of the children, wash the clothes and get the meals.

More and more people are coming to follow his teachings. People of the most varied ages and walks in life come to him for advice. Often pilgrims include his house among the holy places they visit, and sometimes whole groups of pilgrims of both sexes come solely for the purpose of getting a look at him. He presents them with books for the common people, mostly his own works or those of his followers put out by the Posrednik Publishers.

One morning our sitting was interrupted by the arrival of a gentleman and his wife who asked to speak to Lev Nikolayevich in private.

An hour later Lev Nikolayevich returned greatly agitated and even embarrassed.

"Think of that!" he said. "That young man got married just before graduating from college. Married a prostitute he was passionately in love with and hoped to set her on the path of righteousness. But he won't be able to," said Lev Nikolayevich in a low voice. "She's deeply sunk in nihilism, a dreadful, deep-rooted nihilism. 'Do you believe in God?' I asked her. 'No,' she said almost brazenly. Try as I might, I could not move her. A lost soul. I feel sorry for him, he seems to be a good and gifted young man."

Lev Nikolayevich is fond of waiting on himself, without the aid of servants. When his family returns to Moscow for the winter he sometimes remains at Yasnaya Polyana entirely alone for a whole month. He himself heats the samovar and prepares his meals. These are the times he loves most. He says the tea has a better flavour when you heat the samovar yourself. Often a wandering pilgrim stops at his door, he invites him in, feeds him and gives him tea in an atmosphere pervaded by warmth and love. There is more freedom then, more room for things of the soul.

September 1888

Ilya Repin

LEV TOLSTOI AS I KNEW HIM

Being so strong a personality, Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoi inevitably imposed his own mood on those about him. Wherever he was, the moral aspect of man's nature became uppermost, crowding out all the trivial interests of everyday life.

The spiritual atmosphere he created always took complete possession of me. In his presence I submitted wholely to his will, like one hypnotized. And as long as he was present, everything he said seemed to me irrefutable.

His beliefs are too well known for me to go into them here. In this brief account I shall try to report only a few of the external circumstances and events of his life that I was fortunate enough to witness.

I. IN MOSCOW

His first appearance. Late in the afternoon of a day in 1880, the air of my little studio in Bolshoi Trubny Street in Moscow seemed suddenly to take on a rosy tinge and be stirred by little waves of rapture as a thick-set man with a big head and big grey beard and wearing a long black frock-coat came in.

Lev Tolstoi. Not really! So this is what he is like! I knew him only from the portrait painted by Kramskoi and imagined that he was very distinguished in appearance, a count, tall and dark and with a smallish head.

But this was an odd individual, a man devoted to impassioned activity, a preacher by conviction. He spoke in a deep and gentle voice. When he became greatly agitated a tragic note crept into it, and from under his beetle brows his eyes flashed with a fierce call to repentance.

We sat down at my oaken table, where he went on with a sermon he seemed to have begun long ago about the shocking indifference we mortals display to the horrors of our life; we have become so used to them that we no longer notice them; we have fallen into the habit of living in the midst of them and go on living, plunging down a path of corruption; we have become deaf to the voice of conscience, oblivious of our unjust relations to our lesser brothers, whom we have cruelly enslaved and constantly oppress.

The more he spoke the more agitated he became. He hastily gulped down a glass of water poured out of the water-bottle.

By this time the lamp on the table had been lighted and the air quivered with dark and mysterious forebodings. We seemed to be on the eve of a dreadful judgement day. All this was new and alarming.

When he got up to go home I asked permission to accompany him to his house, which was a fifteen-minute walk away.

On taking leave of me he invited me to join him in his evening walks if I were free at the end of my working day.

These walks took place almost every evening until his family left Moscow for Yasnaya Polyana.

We walked great distances down the endless Moscow boulevards, entirely unaware of how far we went, so much and so fascinatingly did Tolstoi talk.

The impassioned and extremely radical judgements he passed excited me so much that I could not sleep afterwards; my head spun with his merciless denunciations of our outworn forms of life.

But the thing that caused me most pain was his attitude towards art. He denounced art.

"I am inclined to join the vast majority of our intellectuals who blame you for casting off this wonderful gift of the gods, especially your own gift," I said.

"Blame me! They are like children begging their nurse to tell them the same tale she told them last night—not a new one, they don't want a new one—only the one they heard last night. I know a young artist who gave up painting: he found it positively immoral to devote himself to art in such times. He became a village schoolmaster."

Finding ourselves late for dinner, we would usually return by horse-car, always taking a seat on top, where he loved to sit.

Evening Moscow would have lighted her lamps; from our vantage point we got a good view of the town, seething with activity at this busy hour. The ant-hill was astir, veiled in the shadows of the darkening streets. But I would be too deep in the throes of a guilty conscience to give myself up to a contemplation of street scenes.

"Do you know what your art and your devotion to it remind me of?" Lev Nikolayevich once asked. "A ploughman is bent on the task of digging deep into the soil, and suddenly someone steps into his path and says, pointing to a worm: 'Take pity upon that poor worm! It is barbarous to disturb him!' Or yet: 'Couldn't you go round those charming wild flowers?' That's what your art is worth in these grave times!"

II. AT YASNAYA POLYANA

In August of 1891 I saw Lev Nikolayevich at Yasnaya Polyana living the simple life.

That was expressed, among other things, in his clothes. He wore a black home-made blouse, black trousers of no particular style and a white peaked cap much the worse for wear. Despite this primitive apparel and the shoes worn on bare feet, there was something imposing about his appearance. Yet there was not a trace left of the count who had made such an impression on the young teacher in his school at Yasnaya Polyana back in the sixties: "Who? Tolstoi? Why, he is a count to his very finger-tips!"

Lev Nikolayevich and I often walked two versts along a forest path leading to a stream of very cold water where we had a bathe.

As soon as we left the estate Lev Nikolayevich would take off the shoes he had made himself, push them under his belt and walk barefoot. He strode ahead with a quick, sure stride, paying not the slightest attention to the twigs and stones in the path. I had difficulty in keeping up with him, and on reaching the stream would be so overheated that I feared to enter the cold water until I had sat for fifteen minutes or so to cool off.

"That's a mere superstition," said Lev Nikolayevich, swiftly slipping out of his few clothes and, despite the sweat pouring down his back, leaping instantly into the cold water. "No harm will come of it," he called out from the stream.

Before I was ready to enter he would have emerged, jumped into his clothes, taken up his basket and set out alone in search of mushrooms.

He cut a very striking and original figure: barefoot, alone with his basket in the woods, and with a military bearing that showed itself in his swift stride and his peculiar manner of wearing his white peaked cap a little to one side.

His beetle brows and penetrating gaze marked him out as one born to rule. No one ever dared to be familiar with him or to show him contempt. And yet he was the kindest and most considerate of men, a thorough aristocrat in his manners and his refined way of speaking. How fluently and exquisitely he spoke foreign languages! How thoughtful, generous and unaffected he was with everyone he met! And how bursting with life and passion, despite his being an ascetic! Never in my life have I heard anyone laugh so contagiously. When the sculptor Gintsburg mimicked various people for the entertainment of the family at Yasnaya Polyana after dinner out on the verandah, everyone laughed, but Gintsburg told me later he had not dared to look at Lev Nikolayevich for fear of losing his self-control. No one who watched Tolstoi laugh could help laughing himself. And I confess that during the performance I looked only at him, unable to tear my eyes away from such an expressive sight.

His richly gifted nature brimmed over with life and feeling.

The sages of all times and nations who knew God were his chosen companions; only with them was he blissfully happy, only with them was he among his peers. The religion he recognized was incommensurable with any formal creed or cult; for him it was contained in a single concept: God is one for all.

Once when we came to an unforgettably beautiful spot among young trees at the top of a steep ascent, Lev Nikolayevich told me this had been a favourite retreat for them as children, and that they had always been led in their games by his eldest brother Nikolai. After playing a whole series of games with a magic wand, they ended up with the ceremony of burying it in a secret place. It was said that if anyone found the wand, the earth would become a paradise.

"All of us adored Nikolai and spent hours searching for the magic wand," said Lev Nikolayevich ruminatively.

On one of our walks he turned suddenly to me and said:

"Now I shall go on alone."

Seeing my surprise, he added:

"At times I feel an urge to pray in the depths of the woods."

"Can one keep it up for any length of time?" I asked innocently, thinking to myself: That must be what the ancient monks called "the labour of the mind."

"Before you know it an hour has passed by," said Lev Nikolayevich.

"Would you allow me to withdraw into the bushes and sketch you at such a time?"

I had formed the habit of sketching him at all of his activities, but I was instantly aware of the tactlessness of this particular request.

"Sorry," I hastened to say. "Of course I couldn't. . . ."

"Oh, there's nothing wrong in it. Like a vain beauty who has lost all sense of shame and honour, I never refuse to allow anyone to draw me any more. Humph! Ah, well—make your sketches if you want to," he said with a smile.

And that is how I happened to make a study of him, barefoot, at prayer. I wanted to make a life-sized portrait, the moment seemed such a profoundly significant one. Tatyana Lvovna gave me canvas, but the piece was too small, I had to sew a patch to the bottom.

Lev Nikolayevich generously posed for this big portrait, which I painted in the garden. He even approved of my work. On the whole he has such an instinctive weakness for art that he finds himself becoming infatuated involuntarily.

In the noonday heat of an August day Lev Nikolayevich set out to plough a widow's field for her. He allowed me to go with him. It was one o'clock when we left. He wore his white cap and a light coat over his usual rough work-blouse, which had faded from black to purple. In the stable he took two plough-horses, put on the yokes and led them away by the reins.

At the edge of the village of Yasnaya Polyana we entered the yard of a wretched hut. Lev Nikolayevich gave me the reins of one of the horses to hold while he hitched the other to a makeshift harrow. Having drawn even the two ends of the hitching rope, he went to the barn (which he seemed to be familiar with) and brought out a plough, the ropes and fixtures of which he adjusted as skilfully as a carpenter fits a saw into the handle, and hitched it to the first horse.

He picked up his coat, took a bottle of water out of the side pocket, descended into a hollow and hid it under a bush, covering it with his coat. Then, tying the reins of the second horse to the back of his belt, he took hold of the handles of the plough; we went out of the yard and began to plough. He ploughed on and on—endlessly, it seemed.

For six hours without stopping he cut through the black soil, now climbing the hill, now descending it.

Having my sketch-book with me as usual, I took up my stand at the half-way point and tried to catch the outlines of the whole cortege as it passed me by. They were past in less than a minute, and to double my opportunity I would cross over to the other side and catch them on the return. I could do nothing but sketch in the contours and verify the relative sizes of the figures; I left the shading for later, registering it from a single point at a single moment.

From time to time peasants from the village would pass by, doffing their caps and going on their way as if unaware of anything unusual in the sight of a count ploughing.

But one group of peasants seemed to be strangers here. Perhaps they had come from a distant village: a muzhik, his wife and a teen-age girl. They stopped and stood staring for a long time. And, strange as it may seem, I had never before seen irony stamped so clearly on simple peasant faces. In the end they exchanged glances and supercilious smiles and went on their way.

But the great ploughman kept on walking regularly back and forth, increasing the number of his furrows. The only changes to be noted were the lengthening of the shadows and the darkening of the ploughman's blouse, especially on breast and shoulders, from dirt and sweat. Occasionally he would leave the plough for a moment to make his way over the soft earth to the hollow, there to drink from the bottle of white wine mixed with water. The streams of sweat pouring down the wrinkles of his face glistened in the sunlight.

Later I asked permission to try my hand at the plough. It was with the greatest difficulty I managed to do the downhill stretch (making an alarmingly crooked furrow), and when it came to going uphill I found myself unable to take ten steps. It was unbelievably hard work! Unused to gripping the stout handles, my fingers grew numb and lost their hold; my shoulders ached from constantly lifting the plough to guide it, and pains shot through my elbows from holding the handles, lever-like, in one and the same position. I had to give up. So this is what is meant by "... in the sweat of one's brow!" thought I, mopping my face.

"It's just because you're not used to it," said Lev Nikolayevich. "I, too, found it hard at first. Tomorrow, too, you'll feel it in your arms and shoulders. Yes, there's no doubt about it: physical labour is the hardest," he observed with a good-natured smile.

And again he set out on his endless path back and forth, back and forth over the soft and fragrant earth. There he was, Mikula Selyaninovich, who defied the most gallant knights in armour to vanquish him! Mikula, armed with nothing but endurance and the habit of working!

It was growing dark when we returned home; the clear sky studded with stars promised a cold night. The air was so chilly that I feared he would catch cold—his blouse was soaked through with sweat. Lights gleamed cheerfully in the windows of the house: dinner was being kept for us. I could say, like the fly on the horns of the ox: "We were ploughing."

III. THE YEAR OF FAMINE

In the winter of 1892 I visited Lev Nikolayevich in the Ryazan Gubernia where he had opened dining-rooms to feed the starving. There had been an unusually heavy snow-fall that year. Blizzards had buried all the roads and levelled even deep gulleys.

Tolstoi's dining-rooms covered an area of some thirty versts, and he made the rounds several times a week to verify how they were being run.

"Wouldn't you like to go with me?" he asked.

I accepted the invitation with pleasure.

"But that town coat you're wearing won't do. There's a wind out in the fields, you must put on something warmer. Won't you have my *tuloup*?"

His *tuloup*, a black sheepskin covered with dark-blue woollen cloth, was so heavy I could hardly lift it. I decided to keep to my coat, merely asking for something warm to wear underneath, and for felt boots—the most important of all.

"Of course you must put on felt boots. What have you on? High galoshes? Oh, no; you can't do without felt boots, you'll see for yourself. We have an extra pair."

I was to be very thankful for those felt boots.

It was a cold day, about 25°C. below zero, with a strong wind blowing from the north. The sun shone blindingly. The snow-banks in the villages formed frozen mountains that glittered like unpolished marble. In places the road ran higher than the houses, to which one descended along passages between towering white walls. The villages looked very odd, very exotic.

We visited two dining-rooms. One of them was in a big house. Down the whole length of its single room (and in the entranceway as well) narrow tables made of two planks on improvised legs had been set up. A great many children were fed in this dining-room. It was not yet time for the meal to be served, but the children had been waiting there since morning, some of them sitting on benches, others out in the entranceway, but the greatest number up on the stove, where they were piled one on top of another. As soon as Lev Nikolayevich had verified the accounts of the women who ran the dining-room, we went away.

At the next village we arrived when the meal had just ended and people were rising from the tables. They murmured prayers and thanks as they straggled out. Here, too, most of them were young people and children. The elders seemed ashamed to partake of Tolstoi's hospitality.

Some families were allotted rations. We visited a few of them, too. I was very much struck by the lighting effect in one of the huts. The rays of sun, refracted on the snow and pouring through the tiny window, created the chiaroscuro of a Rembrandt picture.

Lev Nikolayevich questioned the wife in this hut as to the needs of her family and those of their neighbours. At last we set out for home along a different road. The countryside was hilly. Very beautiful. In the distance we could see the Don River. It went up and down, up and down. Our sledge skidded wildly on the turns. Lots of fun. But I was anxious to reach home—my shoulders and legs ached from sitting so long in the sledge.

Swiftly we advanced over the glistening road. The horse had stood waiting in four places and was only too glad to have a run. The harness squeaked, the yoke and shafts clicked cheerily.

Oh, what a jolly ride!

But suddenly as we were going down a hill our smooth runners skidded, described a full semicircle to the left and—woa-a-a!—there we were slipping backwards into a ditch and pulling the mare with us. The shafts struck her legs, she could not keep a foothold on the icy road, she slipped, slipped, and suddenly there she was, lying in snow deeper than the sledge; only her head could be seen framed in the yoke. She kicked and struggled for a while, the poor wretch, then lay down serenely. Very comfortable in her soft bed. We, too, in the sledge, were half buried in snow.

I could not imagine what we were to do. Sit and wait until some good people happened to come by and pull us out?

But Lev Nikolayevich quickly struggled out of the sledge, pulled off his five-pood *tuloup,* tossed it in the direction of the horse and began stamping down the snow so that he could make his way to the animal.

"First of all we must unharness her," he said. "Set her free of harness and shafts so that she can climb back on to the road."

The north wind stirred up clouds of snow-dust all around us. On the background of the blue sky Lev Nikolayevich, working away in the snow, looked like some mythological god among the clouds. His strong face was flushed, his enormous beard sparkled with hoarfrost. All his movements were as clear-cut and deliberate as those of a conjurer. Soon he had almost reached the horse. Following his example, I began digging my way toward her from the other side, keeping to the edge of the sledge and the shaft. Oh, that was when I appreciated my felt boots! What would I have done in galoshes? They would have filled with snow in no time. What a joy the boots were! Now I, too, had reached the horse.

But here we were confronted by another danger. The animal did not perceive our good intentions, and, having had a little rest, she suddenly began kicking and struggling. She'll kill us! She'll break a leg! I had already received a few painful kicks.

But by this time Lev Nikolayevich had unbuckled the straps, removed the yoke, thrown it on the sledge, set the horse free of the shafts and, holding it by the tail, was urging it up the bank and on to the road. In a few leaps the horse was up and Lev Nikolayevich, still holding it by the tail, was on the road beside it. From there he tossed me the reins so that I could tie them to the shafts and the horse could pull the sledge out of the ditch.

Inexperience and cold made my fingers clumsy. The task was a hard one, but like one hypnotized I understood what was wanted and did it. I tied the reins to the shafts, pulled out the *tuloup* that had been trampled into the snow, threw it into the sledge and climbed over the packed-down snow with the reins in my hand. Lev Nikolayevich caught hold of the reins, pulled me up by them, fastened them to the straps of the yoke, and behold! our sledge moved triumphantly out of the ditch on to the road! What happiness!

And during all this time not a soul had come our way.

Thank goodness the sledge and trappings had remained intact; we had but to reharness the horse. Lev Nikolayevich undertook this with the ease and skill of one accustomed to doing it. He fitted on the yoke, bracing one leg against the horse to pull the straps tighter, slipped the reins through the ring, put the bit into the horse's mouth, and—there we were! Now we had only to get the snow out of the *tuloup*. We each took an end and tried to shake the sheepskin free of the lumps of snow clinging to the wool. What a weight! We could hardly keep a foothold as we shook it. But Lev Nikolayevich could not put it on with all that snow inside! I grew hot from our efforts and was enjoying myself immensely.

"Ho-ho! That's it!" said Lev Nikolayevich with a laugh. "Now," he said, "we'll take the road down that hill over there and go the rest of the way along the Don. It's a good road, I know it, and the wind doesn't pile up such snow-drifts along the river. How was that for a ditch, eh? Did you ever see such deep snow? But you were right up to the occasion. I've noticed that painters are usually capable people. Take Ghe—wonderfully versatile, never at a loss no matter what happens. Are you frozen stiff?" he laughed, looking at me with eyes streaming from wind and frost and beaming with good-nature.

Briskly, merrily, we sped along the quiet Don. The horse had enjoyed a rest in the ditch, and the road, smooth and glistening, was made for speed. The only annoyance was the sharp wind that blew incessantly from the left. My companion's beard blew out on either side as we discoursed cheerfully about our friends.

"And what about you? Do you still consider yourself as incompetent as ever? Ha-ha! An artist without talent! Ho, ho! But I'm glad if you really think that of yourself. You're really devoted to art and will never give it up?"

"Never."

"Humph!... Just see how the horse is enjoying it!... And you're still a pagan by conviction, but one who believes in goodness? That's how you put it, isn't it? That's not enough, not enough."

Suddenly I clearly saw an opening in the ice some thirty paces in front of us. Icy vapours were rising out of the dark hole. I glanced at Lev Nikolayevich, but he was calmly guiding the racing horse. We were making straight for the opening! I was horrified!

"My God!" I shouted and seized both of his hands to stop the horse.

But how could it be stopped when it was going at such speed? The horse slipped and, as in a fairy-tale, we skimmed through the vapours over the yawning hole.

Not a hole at all it turned out. In this spot the ice of the Don was as transparent as a mirror, revealing the dark depths beneath, and the snow-dust blown by the wind gave the illusion of rising vapours. It was as if I had awakened from a dreadful nightmare. I was ashamed of myself.

IV. IN ST. PETERSBURG, 1897

My studio in St. Petersburg had the honour of receiving a visit from Lev Nikolayevich, accompanied by Sophia Andreyevna and his devoted followers: Chertkov, Biryukov, Gorbunov and others.

It was at about eleven o'clock on the morning of the 8th of February that my unexpected guests burst in upon me like a blast of fresh air.

They had stopped in to see me on their way to Gavan, where Chertkov lived in his mother's house. Lev Nikolayevich had come from Moscow to see off Chertkov and Biryukov, who were being banished from the country by the government.

And so here in my enormous studio were gathered a group of Tolstoi's closest friends. They followed their teacher from picture to picture, eagerly listening to his remarks.

The one chosen for particular honours was *The Duel.* Tears came to Lev Nikolayevich's eyes as he gazed at it and he had much to say in praise of it. All studied it and drank in Tolstoi's every word.

After making a round of the studio we all descended the stairs to the street, where a crowd was waiting for us.

We joined this crowd and, filling up the whole street, made our way to the horse-car line on Bolshoi Prospekt.

The conductor of the car, a middle-aged man, gasped in wonder on catching sight of Tolstoi and cried out: "Good gracious, friends, it's . . . why, it's Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoi!" and reverently pulled off his cap.

In his short sheepskin coat and felt boots Tolstoi had the appearance of a Scythian chieftain. His firm step spoke of an indomitable spirit. He was like a living statue of the stone age.

Amazing indeed! Prominent cheek-bones, a rough-hewn nose, a long shaggy beard, enormous ears, a bold and determined mouth, brows jutting out over his eyes like plates of armour. A fierce, imposing, belligerent appearance, and yet this chieftain and his followers had long since scrapped all their weapons and pledged themselves to defend peace and the freedom of the spirit armed with nothing but their convictions and their own humility.

Tolstoi's whole appearance and personality is living testimony to the triumph of the spirit over the passions of this world. And his eyes are radiant with this triumph.

Vladimir Chertkov always chose as a place of residence some picturesque spot at the edge of town.

The beauty of this particular house began with the row of handsome shade trees that encircled it. The house itself was situated deep within a park. It was low, only one storey high, and very charming.

He was awaited on the grounds and inside the house by grave-faced people he had never seen before, members of religious sects, neatly and modestly dressed, people evidently of strong character, mostly men who seemed to be artisans.

In the largest room of the house a sort of religious meeting was held.

Lev Nikolayevich sat in the centre, and round him, sitting and standing, were fine ladies, intellectuals, students, teen-agers, and beyond them—dozens of pairs of serious eyes gazing out from under knitted brows. Strained attention.

Still people kept pouring into the room. One got the impression that the floor was elevated near the walls, like the floor of an amphitheatre. People were sitting not only on the floor, window-sills, benches and chairs, but even on cupboards and dressers. They crowded in the doorways leading into other rooms. Most of them were grave and simple people with eyes full of faith. The voice of the speaker was soft and impressive and often quivered with emotion. And people listened to him breathlessly until it grew dark and the lamps were lighted. This, it seems to me, was one of the most precious moments in Tolstoi's life.

V. ONCE MORE AT YASNAYA POLYANA

At the end of September, 1907, I again visited Yasnaya Polyana, twenty years after my first visit.

Lev Nikolayevich was strong and energetic, but he had acquired the dispassionateness of a religious devotee.

He understood and forgave everything.

All his attention was concentrated on his book *Circle of Reading* which he was editing and elaborating for a new edition. Nothing else seemed to exist for him.

Early in the morning, before nine o'clock, he took a walk. After breakfast he worked on the book until half past one, during which time no one dared to interrupt him. No one entered his study.

The family had lunch at half past twelve. He had lunch alone an hour later. After lunch he went to the "tree of the poor" where those in need of his help (peasants, pilgrims, tramps, wayfarers, sometimes nuns) were waiting for him, some of them having come early in the morning.

After conversing with these righteous people he would mount his horse and take a ride for two hours or so, returning at five o'clock for a half-hour's rest before dinner.

Being myself a passionate lover of horses and horseback riding, I took great pleasure in watching Tolstoi mount and ride.

I could not bear to see amateurs climbing up on a horse as if they were climbing a roof, approaching from the side, or even from behind, and clambering up on the poor creature's back from a step, a bench, or a stool, as if afraid of their lives, violating all the professional rules. A country nag might forgive them, but a full-blooded riding-horse—never!

Lev Nikolayevich approached a horse like an experienced cavalryman, from the head. Taking the reins in his left hand in the accepted way near the mane, he drew them even and, holding a tuft of the mane along with the reins, took the left stirrup in his right hand. Despite the height of his horse and his seventy-nine years, he did not stand on a step or a stool, nor did he have a groom help him. He lifted high his left leg, thrust it deep into the stirrup, took hold of the back of the English saddle with his right hand and swiftly swung his right leg over the saddle. With the toe of his right boot he gave the right stirrup a little push, slipped his foot in, and off he went, sitting easily and gracefully in the French manner.

In 1873 Kramskoi, who was then working on a portrait of Tolstoi, had written me that Tolstoi in hunting clothes and in the saddle was the handsomest figure he had ever set eyes on.

Twice during this visit I went riding with him. The first time he went through the orchard, which was situated at the top of a hill, turned to the right, came out upon the road by crossing the ditch round the orchard, then made a sharp turn into the woods at a spot where there was not a sign of a path. Through thick grass shaded by the branches of tall trees he led me down into a dark gully overgrown with high grass. I could hardly keep up with him. Branches blinded me, the horse sank in the boggy soil, I had to lean far back in the saddle because of the steepness of the descent. Suddenly the difficulties I was encountering made me feel very gay and young and brave. Up ahead my hero, like Ezekiel's Jehovah in paintings by Raphael, with parted beard and the grace and prowess of a warrior or a Circassian, was making his way through the trees, now bending low over the saddle, now pushing the branches away with his hand.

We came out on the road. It was thickly strewn with oak and maple leaves which crunched pleasantly under the horses' hoofs.

"Would you mind taking a brisk trot or even galloping a little?" he asked me modestly.

"Not in the least," I said, delighted. "Do whatever you please; I'll keep up."

My Forest King set out at a quick English trot. The golden rays of the sun made a sort of aureole of his beard, which was streaming out on either side. The King went faster; so did I. Suddenly I caught sight of a birch-tree bent in a low arc across the road. What's that? Didn't he see it? I must stop him. My heart was in my mouth. The arc was no higher than his breast. His horse was flying ahead.... In an instant Lev Nikolayevich had bent down level with his horse's back and passed safely under the tree. Thank goodness he was safe! I followed his example and could feel the light touch of the tree on my back.

How reckless and fearless he is! But he ought not to take such chances, I thought.

Soon I became used to such handicaps; we passed about twenty of them along the road.

Presently we came to a stretch of state forest pitted with holes, now overgrown, where iron ore had once been dug.

Lev Nikolayevich showed me two places in an enormous oak wood where the land had caved in. This had taken place during his youth, and the cave-in had been so deep that only the tops of giant oaks were visible when water flooded the scene. Now islands had formed in the centre and were already covered with big oaks. We turned the heads of our horses down towards the stream. What splendour! Enormous yellow-leaved maples and giant red-leaved oaks covered the slopes, and in front of us the wooded valley swept away to the horizon. The sunlight falling through the dry autumn air upon the gold of the leaves and the silver of the branches, especially of the aspens, created a miracle of beauty. What an original theme for a picture! Leaves and branches seemed wrought of thin metal and set in the deep blue enamel of the autumn sky.

"Why don't you go into ecstasies?" said Lev Nikolayevich, half-reprovingly. "Just see how lovely it is!"

"One hardly dares speak in the presence of such beauty," I replied. "But in the park surrounding your house, especially as seen from your balcony, it is even more beautiful."

I had not expected to find anything like it in the Russia of our day. Such colossal oaks! Only yesterday at the edge of the park he and I had tried unsuccessfully to encircle the trunk of one of the oaks with our arms. And such trees extended as far as the eye could see—a whole forest of them!

Suddenly Lev Nikolayevich cantered down to a brook at the bottom of the hill. On reaching it his horse leaped to the opposite bank. I had followed at a slower pace and on reaching the bottom could not imagine how they had got across. I set about looking for a ford.

"Why have you stopped?" asked Lev Nikolayevich, turning round. "The best thing is to take it at one leap. Our horses are used to jumping. You may get stuck in the mud if you attempt to ford it; rather dangerous. That's it, that's it, coax her a bit; go back for a little start and take it in one leap. She's a good jumper, I know her."

Never before had I leaped over a brook that size and I had misgivings. Well, said I to myself, let come what may! And again like one hypnotized I did what I was told. I concentrated so hard on the preparation for the jump that it was over before I knew it, and the sensation of the actual leap was as pleasurable as soaring high into the air on a swing. It was over all too soon.

"Good for you," said Lev Nikolayevich with an approving smile. "You're not a bad horseman, you sit tight in the saddle." He gave a little laugh. "You ride better, much better than you play chess. Chertkov got dumped off in this place. But it wasn't his fault, the horse slipped in the mud. He's an excellent rider—was a Guardsman in the cavalry. The horse fell and even rolled over on his leg. I pulled him out and he was laid up for some time."

Vladimir Chertkov is an enormous man—very tall and heavy-set.

On our second outing we covered about seventeen versts. We cut straight through the woods along hardly discernible paths or no paths at all. At last Lev Nikolayevich announced that he had lost his way.

"That's all right, it's time to go home anyway. I'll just give my horse head and she'll take us straight back, you'll see."

And so at a quick trot we let our horses have their way with us. Lev Nikolayevich still took the lead. When we had gone about four versts his horse turned into the bushes to the left.

"What's this?" said Lev Nikolayevich, stopping his horse. "It seems to me we ought to continue straight ahead, but she's turned to the left. I think we ought to go on."

And we went straight on. When we had gone about half a verst Lev Nikolayevich was troubled by doubts.

"No, this isn't right. I shouldn't have interfered, I set her off the track. One should never interfere."

We went back over the trail just covered and when we reached the bushes the horse again turned into them, this time to the right.

"Of course the horse knew best. How is it I didn't recognize the place? See? Here's the road. Horses always know better than we do."

Soon we came out upon a large field of winter rye, a beautiful emerald green in colour. Lev Nikolayevich turned straight into the green. In the distance we could see the Tolstoi estate at Yasnaya Polyana.

"Ought we to trample down the grain?" I asked cautiously. "It's a rye field."

"That doesn't matter at this stage. I always do it. Used to when I went hunting. It doesn't matter. The cattle even grazes on winter wheat after the frosts set in."

We returned over hilly fields, now climbing to a crest, now descending into a hollow, and I could not but wonder at the horsemanship of my 79-year-old companion: he took steep grades that nearly threw me out of the saddle without seeming to notice them.

"When you come to such steep climbs you want to hold on to the horse's mane and dig your knees hard into the horse's flanks," he warned me. "The horse stretches out so that the straps become loose and the saddle may slip. If a rider only holds on to the reins he may fall off and pull the horse back upon him."

We had almost reached the estate by this time. The figure of Lev Nikolayevich on his dappled mount was etched sharply against the warm glow of the setting sun. As we descended to the road Lev Nikolayevich let his horse break into a gallop. I felt this was against all the rules: we were almost home, the horses were already in a sweat, and the approach to the house was uphill.

But I found it impossible to hold in my Kazak (the name of my horse). He, too, was off and away in a thrilling gallop. What valour and daring a horse shows! Kazak quite lost his head. In a mood of complete anarchy, he ignored the hand that had so far kept him at a respectful distance behind my companion, and tore up ahead. I could do nothing with him. He was all aflame, and I could feel his muscles, like molten metal, moving rhythmically beneath me. What a race that was!

When we reached the house Lev Nikolayevich jumped off like a young man, and I myself felt ten years younger.

V. N. Davydov

Vladimir Nikolayevich Davydov (1849-1925): a famous actor of the Alexandrinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg. In 1922 he was awarded the title of People's Artist of the Republic

FROM THE REMINISCENCES OF AN ACTOR

At the end of the eighties of the last century I was invited by Moscow students to take part in a concert they were holding. I accepted the invitation. Anxious to read something new and fresh for the students, my mind turned to Tolstoi's *Power of Darkness*, which was being passed from hand to hand and had roused a great deal of interest but had not yet received the permission of the censor to be presented on the stage.

I thought: Why shouldn't I read a scene or two from *The Power of Darkness* at the student concert?

And so I decided to go and see Lev Nikolayevich, who was living in Khamovnichesky Street in Moscow.

I presented myself, feeling very shy and excited. Lev Nikolayevich gave me a smile that lighted up his face in the particular way a small child's face lights up when, after a spell of crying, it suddenly smiles, warming one's heart like a ray of sunlight shining through storm-clouds.

"Delighted to see you," said Lev Nikolayevich, taking my hand. He continued to hold it as he said, with a gay smile:

"Well, so you're a revolutionary, are you?"

He was referring to my having left the Emperor's Theatre and joined the Korsh troupe. It had caused a lot of talk and was looked upon as a mark of protest on my part.

I was astounded by his remark. How in the world, thought I, does he find time among his innumerable occupations to pay heed to the affairs of an insignificant mortal like me?

He invited me to sit down and asked what he could do for me.

I explained that I had come to ask his permission to give a public reading of his *Power of Darkness* and to allow me to read a few scenes to him.

I proposed reading first the scene between Anyutka and Mitrich and asked Lev Nikolayevich to correct me if he found my interpretation unsatisfactory.

He willingly agreed, sat me in a chair facing the sofa, placed a little table in front of me and himself sat down on the sofa opposite me.

I was exceedingly nervous when I began reading, but gradually took myself in hand.

As I read the conversation between Anyutka and Mitrich I could hear Lev Nikolayevich making little sounds of approval: "U-huh . . . u-huh. . . ."

When I read the scene in which Nikita expresses a horror of what he has done, I chanced to glance up and was dumbstruck to see tears streaming down Lev Nikolayevich's face, heretofore so sternly critical. In one place he even sobbed.

I was deeply touched, and also encouraged: I must have caught the right mood if my reading could make such an impression on Tolstoi.

When I had finished he said in a voice full of feeling and gratitude:

"Good. Very good indeed. Where have you learned the intonation of the Russian peasant?"

I said I loved the Russian peasant and his songs, which I had learned by going among them and being one of them.

"I've had more than one drink with them and I've heard them sing their songs at gatherings in their huts on long winter evenings. That's where I learned the folk language," I said.

"You read it very, very well," said Lev Nikolayevich. "An excellent Akim. Matryona too. But especially Anyutka. An incomparable Anyutka. I'd be delighted if an actress could do it half as well."

His praise elated me.

"But you didn't get Mitrich right," he went on. "You mustn't forget that Mitrich was a soldier and lived in towns, so he had a different manner of speaking and a different view of life from the villagers."

"Perhaps you would show me how Mitrich should be read, Lev Nikolayevich?" I ventured to say.

He picked up the book and began to read with such simplicity that it was as if he were not reading at all, as if Mitrich himself were speaking. I instantly grasped the point, saw how Mitrich should be interpreted and the difference between his language and that of Akim, Pyotr and the rest. Then and there I jotted down notes that I have preserved to this day, and for which I am deeply grateful to Lev Nikolayevich.

I. Y. Gintsburg

Ilya Yakovlevich Gintsburg (1859-1939): a sculptor, elected to the Academy of Fine Arts in 1911

MEMORIES OF THE PAST

I. AT YASNAYA POLYANA

I modelled my first statuette from life in 1891. It was of Vladimir Vasilyevich Stasov, who was very much pleased with it and suggested that I should go to Yasnaya Polyana and do one of Tolstoi. Stasov offered to help me make arrangements, and accordingly wrote to Sophia Andreyevna asking her to speak to Lev Nikolayevich and obtain permission for me to come. Soon an answer was received from Sophia Andreyevna: I was to come.

I was not quite well when I went to Yasnaya Polyana, and in addition I felt anxious about the task I had undertaken. I knew that Tolstoi did not like to pose and that the well-known portrait-painter Kramskoi had found it very difficult to paint him.

So it was with a heavy heart that I arrived at Yasnaya Polyana. For some reason now forgotten I was two nights on the road, arriving thoroughly exhausted at about nine o'clock in the morning of the third day. There was no one on the large glassed-in verandah except an English governess who was pouring out tea. In one corner I noticed a covered bust. This encouraged me; it meant that some other artist was already at work here.

Presently Lev Nikolayevich appeared. He came over to me, almost as if he were attacking me, and held out his hand, saying:

"I suppose you're Gintsburg. We expected you last evening."

I was so confused that I could find nothing to say. After gazing steadily at me for a moment with his penetrating eyes, he added gently:

"Have you brought clay with you?"

I realized he had said this purposely to give me a chance to overcome my discomfiture, which he could not have helped noticing.

"I have, but not very much," I replied, appreciating his kindness and sympathy. I was suddenly at ease, as if a load had been lifted off my chest. I showed Lev Nikolayevich the clay I had brought.

"Too little, too little," he said. "How could you have brought so little material with you? But that's all right, I know a place out in the fields where there is fine clay. After dinner I'll take you there and we'll dig up a lot of it. But you must have a rest now; help yourself to tea or coffee, whichever you prefer."

Lev Nikolayevich was standing at the table hastily drinking up his own coffee as he spoke. He then asked me a few questions about Stasov and went out.

Soon Repin came in and I was overjoyed to see my good friend. He showed me the bust of Tolstoi he had begun and which he worked on every evening.

"Now I am going to paint Lev Nikolayevich in his study. Let's go together. You can begin your statuette."

"I'm tired from the trip and I have a headache," I objected weakly.

"You had better not put it off," insisted Repin. "You know how things stand; we haven't much time."

I took his advice and went with him.

Tolstoi was writing at a desk by the window. I was struck by the appearance of the room: it resembled the cell of a medieval monk, with its vaulted ceiling, iron grating over the windows, old furniture, rings suspended from the ceiling, a scythe and a saw in the corner. It had, moreover, an air of mystery. Tolstoi in a white blouse was sitting on a low crate covered by a piece of carpet with one leg crooked up under him, looking for all the world like a wizard from a fairy-tale. He glanced up in surprise as we entered and said:

"You've come to work? Good. Will this pose do?"

We began arranging our things. I sat down next to Repin, who was finishing his portrait. I was greatly impressed by his work: the furnishings of the room, the light coming through the window and the figure of Lev Tolstoi were all portrayed with amazing veracity and skill (at present this picture is in the Tretyakov Gallery).

I must confess that I found it very hard to work. The fear of making any noise made me sit without stirring, whereas the modelling of a figure in the round requires that one be in constant motion, viewing the model from all sides. I felt that our presence annoyed Lev Nikolayevich. From time to time he would stop working to throw us a puzzled glance, as if wondering what we were doing there.

"Am I making it hard for you?" he once asked.

"Oh, no," said Repin. "It's we who are making it hard for you."

"No," said Lev Nikolayevich, "but sometimes I forget and change my pose. I feel exactly as if I were being given a haircut."

Despite the difficulty, I was able to accomplish something during that first sitting and was very glad that the work was begun.

After dinner Lev Nikolayevich took us out to the fields and showed us where the clay was. He helped us dig it and we brought home a whole sackful. The next day his sons, Mikhail and Andrei, took off their shoes and kneaded it for hours with their bare feet. On the following day it was ready and I set to work. Repin and I worked simultaneously, but his bust was already far advanced. Our sittings took place after dinner on the large verandah.

I began a very large bust, so large that the family was shocked and found it ugly, but Repin said to me:

"That's all right, don't change it, the proportions are splendid. There must be at least one big bust of Lev Nikolayevich."

During the sittings some member of the household would read aloud. Once, I remember, it was the biography of Spinoza; Lev Nikolayevich listened attentively and made occasional remarks. Another time it was Victor Hugo's *Toilers of the Sea*, and Tolstoi wept when we came to the most touching parts.

Sometimes guests joined us on the verandah; they showed great interest in the progress of our work and kept comparing the two sculptures. Lev Nikolayevich was, of course, the centre of attention. Everything seemed to be said either to him or for his sake.

And so we went on working in this way, having two sittings a day: one in his study in the morning, the other on the verandah after dinner.

"I'm afraid these artists are wearing you out, Lev; you look tired."

As a matter of fact we didn't give him a moment's rest, observing him intently even when the sittings were over. He noticed this and it made him uneasy. Repin was particularly persistent, sketching him wherever he went. I was too timid to inflict myself on him when sittings were over and spent the rest of my time sketching his surroundings, his study, the house and the environs of Yasnaya Polyana.

At that time Lev Nikolayevich was writing "The Kingdom of God Is Within You" and in his conversation kept touching on the problems treated in this work. But sometimes he talked to me of art. I particularly remember one such conversation, which took place during a walk. He questioned me about the Academy of Fine Arts, which had just acquired a new teaching staff. He wanted to know what influence the members of the *peredvizhniki* school of painting exercised.

"Vladimir Vasilyevich Stasov has always supported the *peredvizhniki* school and berated the academicians," he said. "Why is he now against having members of the new school enter the Academy?"

I told him the whole story of the new Academy and explained that Stasov was of the opinion that a talented artist ought not to waste his time teaching.

"He is probably right," said Tolstoi.

The discussion of the Academy led to a discussion of art as a whole and sculpture in particular.

"I suppose I ought not to say such a thing to you, a sculptor," began Lev Nikolayevich apologetically, "but I don't like sculptors. I don't like them because they've done a great deal of harm to art and to people. Their work is vicious. They have filled Europe with monuments and statues exalting people who do not deserve to be exalted, who have, in fact, brought harm to humanity. All these captains and marshals and heads of governments have done nothing but damage, but the sculptors have represented them as benefactors of the people. And what is worse, in immortalizing them the sculptors often falsify their appearance. They turn weak, cowardly, degenerate creatures into strong and powerful heroes; they portray a puny little fellow as a giant with a bulging chest and piercing glance. All lies and falsehood. The sculptors have always been in the pay of the rulers and have always truckled to them. No other form of art has disgraced itself so completely."

On the other hand I noticed that Tolstoi was fascinated by our work. He watched it grow step by step and commented on the results. "I can't tell what you will do to it tomorrow, but I like it at present," he often said to Repin at the end of a sitting. "You've even caught my dour expression."

Once, during one of the readings out loud, he asked me for a piece of wax and modelled a little bust of me. I was astonished to see how well he caught the general form of my head.

II. STASOV AT YASNAYA POLYANA

Several times I visited Yasnaya Polyana in the company of Stasov. We usually stayed several days. I particularly remember our last visit, made in the middle of August, 1904.

We arrived in the evening, while the family were having dinner. Lev Nikolayevich and Sophia Andreyevna jumped up from the table and embraced Stasov. They sat us down with them. Stasov sat next to Sophia Andreyevna, I between Lev Nikolayevich and a man who was a stranger to me.

"Don't you know him? Orlov, also an artist. You've no doubt seen his work," said Lev Nikolayevich, adding to me in an aside: "A very fine artist."

A lively conversation began, everybody listening with particular interest to the amusing account Stasov gave of our adventures on the way to Yasnaya Polyana. He was at his best and made everybody laugh.

"It does my heart good to look at you," said Lev Nikolayevich. "You're so gay and energetic and youthful."

In his turn Lev Nikolayevich began to poke fun at us and told us an amusing anecdote.

After dinner the company broke up, some to copy and read proofs of Tolstoi's latest writings, others to attend to their own affairs. Stasov and I remained with Lev Nikolayevich.

"What are you writing at present?" asked Stasov.

"I'm working on texts for a calendar, finishing a few other things and writing an article on Shakespeare. I doubt that anyone will print it at present. Let them bring it out after I'm gone; I'll be spared hearing their shouts and cries."

And he launched on an exposition of what have now become his well-known views on Shakespeare. Stasov tried gently to defend the bard, but the effort made Tolstoi only increase the violence of his attack. I confess to having had apprehensions as to how the quarrel might end, and these were shared by P. A. Sergeyenko, who happened to be in the room at the time. As far as I remember, Tolstoi accused Shakespeare of having no love for the common people, of sympathizing with the upper classes and of being, on the whole, an admirer of the aristocracy.

"I have read the original sources from which Shakespeare took his plots, and they are nothing like what he made of them. They are vastly more interesting and true to life. Shakespeare did not know how to use this material. He overlooked much that is beautiful and significant."

Fortunately the argument did not go beyond safe bounds and we soon switched to another subject.

Late that night, when we were in our own room, Stasov said to me:

"How gay and energetic and youthful Lev Nikolayevich is! As to Shakespeare, I'll tell him my ideas on the subject yet! Let him know that I do not agree with him."

Before we had a chance to dress the next morning Lev Nikolayevich appeared in high spirits.

After breakfast he set out for town on horseback. Stasov went into ecstasies over the way he rode his mount, and greatly admired the mount itself.

"Just see how he sits it! A true cavalryman!"

After dinner Tolstoi again entered into conversation with Stasov. During their talk he read a few passages from Herzen aloud.

"What a sharp and profound mind he had!" said Lev Nikolayevich. "How exact, how telling were the blows he aimed at his enemies! His talented pen allowed his opponents no come-back. Do you remember his incomparable description of two emperors, drawn in a few words?"

Stasov beamed with pleasure as Tolstoi quoted Herzen by heart. Stasov in his turn cited certain sayings and ideas of the great publicist.

The two old men rivalled each other in showing off their knowledge and understanding of Herzen, and it was pleasant to see that here was an admiration they shared. Then they began discussing the new writers and Lev Nikolayevich announced that he liked Chekhov best. Of the others he said:

"As a matter of fact, they all write well nowadays. It's extraordinary how well; they all have a fine artistic style."

When we had gone downstairs, Stasov said to me:

"How he loves Herzen! Herzen and Tolstoi—two giants. I have never known any others of their stature."

For a long time Stasov was unable to settle down; he kept going over and over Tolstoi's words in his mind.

"All that I hear and see here is so important, so priceless that I cannot bear to go away. Do you know what I've thought of? You and I have decided to leave the day after tomorrow, haven't we? Well, tomorrow I'll ask Lev Nikolayevich to read us something from his latest work. Last year when I made the same request he granted it, remember? How he reads! Remember? Simply superb!"

At breakfast the next morning Stasov made his request.

"Very well, during tea this evening I'll read something," agreed Lev Nikolayevich.

Lev Nikolayevich spent almost the whole of that last day in our company. The three of us went for a walk in the park and Lev Nikolayevich told us the story of his *Haji Murat* and other recent writings.

"I must hurry and finish a few other things," said Lev Nikolayevich suddenly, coming to a halt and staring at the ground; then, lifting his eyes to Stasov's face and fixing him with a kindly, searching look: "It's high time we were making ourselves ready, Vladimir Vasilyevich. The good end is at hand."

"What end?"

"Death. I don't doubt but that you are awaiting it."

"Devil take it!" exclaimed Stasov. "Vile, loathsome! And you would have me make ready for it? How often do I lie awake nights tossing on my bed, racked by the thought that I must die."

"But you cannot help realizing that you're old and that death is at hand."

"Nothing of the sort. I still refuse to deny myself any of my former pleasures and I hope you do the same, Lev Nikolayevich. You still play tennis and ride horseback."

At that time Stasov was eighty years old. His strong, massive figure emanated life, health and energy. He walked quickly, holding his hat in his hand because his forehead was always hot. Tolstoi was the younger of the two but he looked the older.

How different their views on life are, I thought. But they love and cherish life equally.

Lev Nikolayevich asked me what I was working on at present.

"Do you ever model animals?" he asked.

"I did at one time, but not to any great extent."

"That is a wonderful art and very important. Especially if you express the love for animals people ought to feel. I once saw a remarkable picture that convinced me to what heights art can attain when it expresses love, no matter how lowly the creature who is filled with it. A dog was standing on the seashore with its tail between its legs, gazing at a ship retreating into the distance. Every line of the creature's body expressed sorrow and longing for the master who had gone away. It left a deep impression and called forth unspeakable pity for the poor animal."

I told him about a sculptured group called *Friends* which I had seen at the Salon in Paris not long before. A monkey was searching for fleas in a dog's coat; the dog lay nestled close to the monkey, its eyes shut in bliss. A sense of friendship was strikingly expressed in this sculptured composition. Lev Nikolayevich liked the idea of it so much that on reaching home he told it to everyone.

Our walk soon brought us to the fence round the estate.

"Wait," said Lev Nikolayevich. "There's an opening here in the bushes that will serve as a short cut," and, after searching in the bushes a moment, he pointed out a rather deep ditch.

"Careful," he warned. "It's dark and the climb is a steep one."

I scrambled to the top with difficulty and turned to give a helping hand to Lev Nikolayevich.

"No thanks; I'm used to it," he said. "I take this short cut every day."

With the lightness of a youth he sprang down into the ditch and clambered up the other side. We found ourselves in a broad lane of trees on the grounds of the estate. It was lighter here.

"This is the oldest lane in the park and the favourite spot of my ancestors. Here my grandmother and grandfather loved to walk."

When tea was over we waited impatiently for the promised treat. Lev Nikolayevich brought a notebook from his study. Stasov sat down next to him. Sophia Andreyevna, still convalescing, sat at a round table in a corner embroidering. Other members of the family were sitting at the other end of the room pasting sayings on the calendar Lev Nikolayevich was composing at the time. I sat down next to Lev Nikolayevich, hoping to sketch him as he read.

Tolstoi began reading an excerpt from *Resurrection*, which absorbed us completely from the very first words. At times I was so carried away that I stopped sketching; the pencil simply dropped out of my hand. One could have heard a pin drop as we sat, spellbound, listening to the account of how the Governor General responded to the request that he ease the lot of the unfortunate prisoner. This was followed by scene after scene astoundingly true to life and full of deep significance. It was as if Lev Nikolayevich were really leading us through a prison, opening for us the cells of those condemned to solitary confinement, giving us true glimpses of this grim aspect of life. When he finished we went on sitting where we were, unable to throw off the spell.

"The fourth part isn't finished," said Lev Nikolayevich, breaking the silence.

It was late by this time and we rose and parted without any desire to talk about other things.

"What a treat!" breathed Stasov when we were in our room downstairs. His eyes were brimming with tears. "The things we have heard this night! The things we have heard!"

I could not fall asleep for a long time, so alive in my mind were the immortal characters created by Tolstoi's genius. Neither could my companion: I heard him tossing and breathing heavily.

Early in the morning Stasov's voice woke me up:

"Are you awake? What do you think of this for an idea? I couldn't sleep, kept thinking about our Lev. What if I ask them to let us stay another day? I can't bear to leave. I want to see and hear more of him. Perhaps we'll never see each other again. It's doubtful that I shall ever come here again."

"He'll hardly read to us a second time," I said.

"But he may say something interesting and important."

At this point a footman came in and brought us some books.

"Lev Nikolayevich asks you to take them with you," he said.

We decided to leave. We packed our things and went upstairs, where Lev Nikolayevich was waiting for us.... We said good-bye. Stasov showed signs of agitation. He spoke in snatches.

"No, I'm afraid we won't ... we'll never see each other again," he kept repeating as if to himself.

Knowing that it was probably for ever, I could not bear to witness the parting of these two friends and walked away.

"Come back again, come back in the winter," Tolstoi called to us from the steps.

V. M. Lopatin

Vladimir Mikhailovich Lopatin (1861-1935): a barrister who later became an actor of the Moscow Art Theatre

STAGE REMINISCENCES

In 1889 I was a judge of the local court and was living in the country when I received an invitation from Tatyana Lvovna Tolstaya to come to Yasnaya Polyana and take part in an amateur production of Tolstoi's *Fruits of Enlightenment* which had not yet been published, and in which I was to play the role of a "shy and edgy" old peasant (as she described him). I was only too glad to accept.

... We began rehearsing. The concentrated attention Lev Nikolayevich paid to my acting somewhat disconcerted me, but it also spurred me on in my effort to effectively portray the traits which I found to be most outstanding in the peasant's personality.

I felt that I was succeeding, and this was corroborated by hearing Lev Nikolayevich's laugh—the hearty, good-natured laugh of a simple Russian peasant—and his words of approval. This pleased and encouraged me. I began to pay more attention to the impression I was making on him, and soon the sense of his approbation of what I myself felt to be a natural and realistic portrayal of the character of the 3rd muzhik dispersed all my doubts and stimulated my imagination. The author's subtle appreciation of each grain of truth I achieved in my acting afforded me genuine artistic gratification and helped me create a living, flesh-and-blood character instead of one of the banal types actors are so liable to produce when playing the part of simple folk, especially peasants.

My acting seemed to make a greater impression on Lev Nikolayevich than I had dared hope for. He was pleased, and his pleasure found expression in an almost childlike delight that embarrassed me.

He laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks, passed remarks to his neighbours, slapped his thighs and shook his head in good-natured peasant fashion.

He came up to me after one rehearsal and said:

"I used to find fault with Ostrovsky for making his characters fit the actors playing them, but now I understand him. Had I known *you* were to play the 3rd muzhik I would have given him different lines. Why, you've revealed him to me, shown me what he was like. I'll have to change the part."

And he picked up the manuscript and went off to revise it.

The role of the 3rd muzhik was changed and elaborated. For one thing he, as the most reliable in character and the most loyal defender of the common cause, was given the money to keep in place of the 2nd muzhik. And in the last act he was made to trip and stretch out full length on the floor in his hurry to enter the Zvezdintsevs' vestibule, instead of merely striking his head against the door-jamb, as in the first version.

That evening over our tea Lev Nikolayevich spoke about the importance and deep meaning of a work of art:

"An artist's power of observation differs from that of other people in that he is able to see things in his environment that escape them. He sees the same things that other people do, but he sees them differently, and by portraying in his art the things that have escaped others, he makes others see and understand them as he does.

"That is why every work of art teaches us something new. You, for instance," he said, turning to me, "gave us a portrayal of a peasant all of us have seen in real life, but you were able to note and reproduce certain things that had escaped us; I myself found much that was new in your portrayal."

Later on in our conversation I was surprised and grieved to discover that Lev Nikolayevich disapproved of Shakespeare. Lev Nikolayevich contended that people belonging to the so-called higher classes went into ecstasies over Shakespeare only because they felt they ought to, only because Shakespeare was generally acknowledged to be a genius, and not at all because they themselves were convinced of the universal significance of his works. On the contrary, thinking people found nothing of interest in the themes Shakespeare treated. His plays were out of date. Of what importance in our day was it that this person loved that person or another person ceased to love? Personal passions, conflicts and intrigues could not touch the heart of our contemporaries. We demanded something quite different of art today—we demanded the solution of problems presented to us by a new way of life, new knowledge and new teachings.

Such a view of art was diametrically opposed to my own, and I voiced my protest. Lev Nikolayevich argued hotly with me. Then, as in all my later encounters with him, I was struck by the serious consideration he gave to another person's opinion, even though he himself was incomparably above the other person as a scholar and thinker. He treated everyone he spoke to as an equal. He argued hotly and sharply, but there was something almost touching in the pure joy that shone in his eyes when he discovered that one of his listeners sympathized with his ideas, or that he had been able to make his listener understand him.

I became firmly convinced that every word spoken by Tolstoi came from the depths of his soul, that he had arrived at the ideas he preached not only through intense intellectual effort, but through tortures of the soul as well.

On the next day we had a dress rehearsal.

The actors were in a state of great excitement. Lev Nikolayevich was pleased and encouraged us with his cheerful and pithy remarks. It was a pleasure to have him in the audience. We actors were aware of his sympathy and goodwill and of that ingenuousness that I had observed to be characteristic of sensitive elderly people who have lived through an epoch in Russia famed for its great actors. His criticism had not a shade of that exacting pedantry and cold analysis that is characteristic of so much of our present dramatic criticism and is capable of putting out the last spark of an actor's inspiration. He gave himself up to his impressions freely, trustingly, and with his whole heart.

The dress rehearsal was a great success.

The day of the performance came. Lev Nikolayevich was very vivacious. Now he was back stage, expressing his delight with a particularly effective costume or make-up, now he was walking among the audience, giving an animated account of how the play had been rehearsed and the actors had performed. After he had seen me in costume and make-up, he went out front and said to the public:

"Wait till you see Lopatin—you'll die laughing... simply die laughing..." and he himself wiped tears of laughter from his eyes.

Such an introduction damped my spirits. A fine thing to say! I said to myself. How can I go out on the boards now that Lev Nikolayevich has advertised me as something that will make them "die laughing"?

As a result my acting was worse than at the dress rehearsal. I expressed my chagrin to Lev Nikolayevich.

"That's how *you* see it," he replied. "We see it quite differently. As for me, I think it was a fine performance."

And that is how *The Fruits of Enlightenment* had its first performance on the 30th of December, 1889.

While trying various sorts of make-up for the dress rehearsal I had held up to my face a beard that resembled Lev Nikolayevich's, and those who saw it were dumbstruck by my resemblance to Tolstoi. Two years later the younger generation of Tolstois remembered this when thinking of a means of amusing themselves during the Christmas holidays. They decided to hold a masquerade in which they would dress up as well-known people of the day, among them Lev Nikolayevich. I was chosen for this role.

I felt a certain diffidence about taking off Tolstoi, fearing for one thing that he might resent a parody on himself, and for another that I would be unable to do it artistically. But I agreed to try it. Tatyana Lvovna brought me a blouse and belt belonging to Lev Nikolayevich. And so on the appointed evening all of us gathered in a wing of the house and donned costumes and make-up. My make-up turned out to be one of the best.

Yasha Gremislavsky, a famous make-up man (who now works for the Moscow Art Theatre), had already got ready a fine beard copied from a photograph of

Tolstoi, and according to the same picture he modelled my features, so that in the end I was a striking duplicate of Lev Nikolayevich.

Having put on his blouse and belt and thrust my thumbs inside the belt, I joined the others and we made our way to the big dining-room.

Lev Nikolayevich was standing in the doorway watching everything with great interest. I was the last to enter. At first the people gathered there seemed puzzled, even embarrassed, to see me, but then they broke into noisy ejaculations of astonishment and approval. To the sound of their applause I went over to Lev Nikolayevich and he held out his hand to me. The grown-ups clapped their hands and laughed, the children shrieked with delight to see two Lev Nikolayeviches shaking hands with each other. Lev Nikolayevich himself laughed heartily and swept me with his eyes from head to toe, saying:

"Where did you get the blouse?"

"We filched it from your room," said I.

All that evening Lev Nikolayevich was very gay. My make-up was so convincing that later, when groups of neighbours in masquerade costumes dropped in and saw me standing at the bottom of the stairs to greet them, they made me deep bows unquestionably meant for Lev Nikolayevich. I bowed in return, simulating to the best of my ability the manner of Tolstoi, so that the look on their faces when the genuine Tolstoi put in an appearance was a sight worth seeing.

But I cannot say I felt comfortable doing an imitation of Tolstoi in his presence. He, however, seemed to find nothing objectionable in it; on the contrary, he was amused and delighted by the likeness.

K. S. Stanislavsky

Konstantin Sergeyevich Stanislavsky (1863-1938): famous stage director, founder (along with Nemirovich-Danchenko) of the Moscow Art Theatre

I MAKE THE ACQUAINTANCE OF TOLSTOI

In about 1893 our amateur theatre known as the Art and Literature Society went to Tula to give a few performances. Rehearsals and all preparations for the tour took place in the hospitable home of Nikolai Vasilyevich Davydov, a close friend of Tolstoi. For the time being the life of the Davydov family was completely subjected to the requirements of our troupe. In between rehearsals we had noisy dinners with one burst of laughter succeeding another. Our host, who was no longer young, seemed transformed into a schoolboy.

One day, in the midst of the fun, an old man in a peasant sheepskin entered the hall and a minute later entered the dining-room. He had a long beard and was wearing felt boots and a grey peasant blouse held in by a belt. His entrance was greeted with joyous cries. At first I did not realize he was Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoi. No photograph, nor even a portrait painted from life, could produce anything like the impression made by his actual appearance. As if Tolstoi's eyes, which seemed to plumb the depths of one's soul, could be put down on paper or canvas! Their expression was now sharp and lacerating, now soft and sunny. When Tolstoi looked at a person he did so with quiet concentration, as if searching his soul and discovering all its secrets, good and bad. At such moments his eyes withdrew behind his eyebrows like the sun behind clouds. At other moments he laughed with childlike spontaneity at humorous remarks or occurrences and then his eyes would come out from behind his eyebrows and sparkle with merriment. If anyone expressed an interesting idea Tolstoi would be the first to show his appreciation. He would become youthfully ecstatic and make little restless movements, and his eyes would glow with the fire of genius.

On the evening I first met him he was mild, gentle and composed, with the benign affability of an old man. As soon as he appeared the children jumped up and ran over to surround him. He knew each of them by name and nickname and asked them questions about intimate matters unknown to us.

Those of us who were guests in the house were introduced to him individually. He held the hand of each and gave each his searching look. His gaze disconcerted me. This unexpected meeting with Tolstoi threw me into a state of such perturbation that I could form no clear impression of what was taking place around and within me. To understand this one would have to know what Tolstoi meant to us. We used to say, "How lucky we are to be alive at the same time as Lev Tolstoi!" And when we became depressed, when life seemed ugly and people seemed beasts, we would find consolation in the knowledge that he, Lev Tolstoi, was living in Yasnaya Polyana; and again life would seem worth living.

He was given a seat at the table opposite me. I must have behaved strangely, for Tolstoi kept casting curious glances in my direction. Suddenly he leaned over and asked me something, but I was too excited to make out what it was. Everybody laughed and this only excited me the more.

It turned out he was asking me what play we were showing in Tula, but I could not for the life of me think of the name of it. I had to be prompted.

Lev Nikolayevich did not know Ostrovsky's *The Last Sacrifice* and was not afraid to acknowledge the fact. He was able to acknowledge things that we felt we must hide for fear of seeming ignorant. He had the right to forget things that lesser mortals were obliged to know.

"Tell me the story of it," he said.

Everyone grew quiet to listen to my account, but, like a student failing at an examination, I could not find a word to say. All of my attempts only called forth roars of laughter. My neighbour's efforts to help me out were equally unsuccessful and the task of telling the story devolved upon our host, Nikolai Vasilyevich Davydov.

Burning with shame, I withdrew into myself and dared do nothing but steal diffident glances at the great man. At about this time the roast was served.

"Wouldn't you like a nice piece of roast beef, Lev Nikolayevich?" chaffed the children and grown-ups, knowing that Tolstoi was a vegetarian.

"I would," he laughed.

From all sides of the table big slices of roast beef were held out to him. Amid general laughter the famous vegetarian cut off a tiny bit, chewed it, swallowed it with difficulty, then put down his knife and fork.

"I can't eat a cadaver," he said. "It's poison. Stop eating meat; only then will you know what it means to be in good spirits and have a clear mind."

Once started on his favourite subject, he expounded at length the well-known tenets of vegetarianism.

But Tolstoi could make the most tedious subject interesting. For instance, after dinner, over our coffee in the dimly lighted study, he recounted for over an hour his talk with a member of a religious sect that had reduced all its beliefs to symbolism. An apple-tree against the background of a red sky represented some joy or sorrow that was about to take place. A dark fir-tree against the background of a moonlit sky represented something quite different. The flight of a bird in a cloudless sky was one omen, in a stormy sky another. One could not help marvelling at his memory. He recited an endless list of these symbols and, by virtue of some irresistible force within him, kept us listening with breathless interest to what was really a dull story.

Later we spoke of the theatre and boasted to him that we were the first to stage his *Fruits of Enlightenment* in Moscow.

"Give pleasure to an old man by having the ban on *The Power of Darkness* lifted, and stage it," he said.

"Would you allow us to?" we asked in one voice.

"I have never forbidden anyone to stage my plays," he said.

We instantly set about distributing roles among the members of our young amateur troupe. We also decided who was to stage the play and how. We even invited Lev Nikolayevich to attend rehearsals, consulted him as to which of the versions of the fourth act we ought to adopt and discussed how we could combine them so as to get rid of the unfortunate pause that occurs at the very climax of the drama. We assailed Lev Nikolayevich with youthful enthusiasm. One might have thought we were deciding an urgent question, that tomorrow we were to begin rehearsing.

Lev Nikolayevich talked to us with such unaffected sincerity that we soon felt at our ease. His eyes, which had just been concealed behind his eyebrows, now sparkled like those of a young man.

"Here," he said, inspired by a new idea, "you write down how you think the parts ought to be combined and give it to me and I will work over the last act according to your ideas."

The young man to whom these words were addressed was so taken aback that he sought refuge behind his neighbour's back. Seeing our confusion, Lev Nikolayevich hastened to assure us there was nothing preposterous or impossible in his suggestion. On the contrary, we, with our knowledge of theatre, would be rendering him an inestimable service. But even Tolstoi was unable to convince us of this.

Several years passed before I was to meet Lev Nikolayevich again. During that time *The Power of Darkness* was passed by the censor and produced in towns all over Russia. It was of course staged as Tolstoi had written it, without combining the various versions of the fourth act. I heard that Tolstoi attended many performances of his play, was pleased with some and displeased with others.

One day I received a note from one of Tolstoi's friends saying Lev Nikolayevich would like to see me. I went to his house, where he received me in his own chambers. He explained that he was not satisfied either with the play *The Power of Darkness* or the various stagings of it.

"Tell me how it was you thought of revising the fourth act that time. I will do it for you and then you stage it."

He said it with such simplicity that I did not hesitate to tell him my ideas. We discussed the matter for a long time.

I remember meeting Lev Nikolayevich by chance one day in a bystreet near his house. It was at the time when he was writing his famous article against war and warriors. I was with a friend who knew Tolstoi well. We met him. Once again I became faint-hearted on seeing him, for he was looking very forbidding with his eyes withdrawn behind his shaggy eyebrows. Apparently he was in an irascible mood. I dropped behind and listened to what he said to my friend. With tremendous force and feeling he denounced the legalized murder which is war. In a word, he said just the things he had written in his famous article. He exposed military men and their immorality and did it the more effectually for having taken part in more than one campaign himself. He could therefore speak not only theoretically, but from personal experience. His brows were drawn, his eyes were burning, and one felt that tears would appear in them at any moment. His voice was harsh, yet touched with deep emotion.

Suddenly two cavalry guardsmen rounded the corner and made straight for us. They were wearing long army coats and shining helmets, their spurs clinked and their low-slung swords clanked as they struck the pavement. They were young, tall, handsome, with strong faces and a masculine, military stride. They were dazzling. Tolstoi stopped in the middle of a word and stared at them with parted lips and arm upraised in an unfinished gesture. His face fairly shone.

"Ah-h!" he gasped. "Magnificent! Bully for them!" And the next instant he was launched on an exposition of the importance of a military bearing. And he spoke with the authority of an old and experienced military man.

V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko

Vladimir Ivanovich Nemirovich-Danchenko
(1858-1943): playwright and stage director;
founder, together with Stanislavsky, of the
Moscow Art Theatre

REMINISCENCES OF TOLSTOI

One day an old man in a sheepskin cap and coat such as peasants wear brought a manuscript to the editorial offices of the magazine *Russkaya Mysl*. The manuscript, which was received by the secretary, was a story written by a peasant named Semyonov. The secretary told the old man to come back in two weeks' time for his answer. In precisely two weeks he reappeared. The secretary told him to wait, nodding towards a wooden settle, and himself went into an inner office where some editors and publishers were engaged in animated conversation. The theme being subversively liberal, its elaborators had bolstered up their courage with a bottle of red wine. The secretary announced that the old man had come back for his answer. Fiction, at that time, was in the hands of Remizov, a tall, fair-haired, bespectacled man who wore a full beard parted in the middle.

"Ah, yes. I've read it," he said. "Tell him to wait. I'll come presently."

But the discussion proved so absorbing that an hour and a half passed without his emerging. At the end of that time the secretary again appeared in the doorway.

"Mitrofan Nilovich, the old man is still waiting."

"Oh, yes. I'll be out directly."

But again so much time passed that the secretary put in a third appearance. At last Remizov found the manuscript and went out.

"Where's the old man?"

The old man got up off of the wooden settle. Remizov went over to him.

"So you are Semyonov? We've read your story. . . ."

Remizov lifted his eyes to the old man's face and his tongue cleaved to his palate: it was Lev Tolstoi! Yes, Lev Tolstoi had been sitting there in the corner for over two hours, waiting for the editor to receive him, so anxious was he to give his personal recommendation of a story by an unknown peasant author whom he found talented and deserving of attention.

The poor editor was not only confounded by the situation that had arisen, he was also at a loss what to do with Tolstoi, for he could not invite him into the inner office until the bottles had been removed.

"That's all right, I had a good rest," said Tolstoi, distressed, no doubt, by the sight of this imposing gentleman's discomfiture and perhaps even blaming himself for having caused it.

I was taken to see Tolstoi by a professor of philosophy named Grot, who was a friend of the Tolstoi family. One evening we went to their home in Khamovnichesky Street in Moscow. The whole family was gathered in the drawing-room. Maria Lvovna was reading Herzen's *Thoughts on the Past* aloud.

Lev Nikolayevich interrupted the reading when we entered and went with me to his study downstairs, where we remained for half an hour or so. Then we again went upstairs and he asked me to read. I did so with pleasure. I remember (as one always remembers the praise of great men) that Tolstoi was pleased with the way I read. A few months later I had further proof of this. He had just finished writing *Haji Murat*. He had been asked for permission to have a chapter from the new work read at a big public function and Sophia Andreyevna herself came to see me and say that Tolstoi was willing to give permission on condition that I should be the one to read it.

I remember very little from my first meeting with Tolstoi. Oh, of course his eyes, those eagle eyes, the eyes of a kind and clever bird of prey. They were his most striking feature. Eyes that convinced anyone who looked into them that not even the most artfully concealed lie could escape them. They penetrated to the depths of the soul. And at the same time there was an almost childlike innocence in the very keenness and concentration of their gaze. It was not the penetration of wise calculation; on the contrary, it was simplicity in the finest sense of the word—the simplicity of one who has nothing to hide and is always open to immediate impressions.

Two things left the deepest marks on my memory. The first was his reaction when I asked, on entering his study, permission to smoke. He looked at me in surprise and asked: "Haven't you read my pamphlet on the harm of tobacco?" I confessed that I had not. His response was emotional, he even seemed upset by the fact and made me promise to read it without delay.

The second was his attitude towards Ibsen. Tolstoi denied his being an exceptional writer. Since I was enamoured of Ibsen at the time, I sprang to his defence. In the end I said I would bring him *An Enemy of the People*, which he had not yet read.

I did take him the play, and imagine my surprise and delight when, a little later, Tolstoi himself came to see me. We were living at the time in a bystreet off Myasnitskaya Street and he covered the long distance from Khamovnichesky Street to our house on foot. He liked our little flat, and especially the garden on which our windows opened and where hens and pigeons pecked in the grass. He returned *An Enemy of the People* to me with the words: "No, it's no good. That Doctor Stockmann of yours is a swaggerer."

He asked me many questions about writers with whom I was more or less intimate. His greatest praise was for Chekhov.

Lev Nikolayevich came to see *Uncle Vanya.* He stubbornly refused to accept Chekhov as a playwright. Tolstoi's biography and diary are sprinkled with negative judgements of him. In one place he says: "Makes no sense," in another he calls one of his plays "nonsense," in still another he reproaches Chekhov for being too autobiographical in *The Sea-Gull.* During the performance of *Uncle Vanya* we found secret corners from which we kept our eye on him all the time. Our observation convinced us that he was drawn into the atmosphere of the play, that the action absorbed his attention and that in places he was touched. But either we were mistaken or he deliberately denied his own spontaneous impressions, for in the intermission he had not a word of praise for us. True, he had not a word of blame either; he seemed to be waiting until the performance was over to pass judgement. When the curtain fell for the last time, he said:

"What else does he (Astrov) want?... It's warm and cosy ... a guitar playing ... a cricket chirping.... First he hankers after somebody else's wife, then falls to dreaming about something else..." and he shook his head disapprovingly.

The Moscow Art Theatre staged Tolstoi's *The Power of Darkness*. With this play we opened our new theatre —that is, our new theatre building. There was something lacking in our production. Outside of a superb Anisya (played by Butova), not a single one of the characters left a lasting impression. The staging was ultra-realistic. Stanislavsky, the director, was still under the charm of accessories, pauses, sounds. We made a journey to a village in the Tula Gubernia to study the daily life of the peasants and record folk songs. We even brought back with us a middle-aged peasant woman to act as consultant during rehearsals. But even so our actors were unable to play the part of peasants and there was some essential element in the dramatic essence of the play that escaped us.

When, at a later date, I met Tolstoi, he told me the performance had been described to him and he had not particularly approved of it—what had been the necessity of all those naturalistic sound effects? With gracious humility I had to inform him that he himself had written into the manuscript of the play: "The neighing of horses is heard," "A gate is heard to click shut."

We got wind of the fact that Tolstoi was writing another play. Naturally, we wanted to obtain it before it was published and became accessible to all theatres. I wired Yasnaya Polyana for permission to visit Tolstoi there. Sophia Andreyevna promptly replied, naming a convenient day.

I spent the whole day with Tolstoi, leaving late in the evening. The play had only been roughly sketched out. Lev Nikolayevich said it required a theatre with a revolving stage since it was to have many scenes in it. I told him we were to have such a stage. Once more we spoke of Ibsen and once more Tolstoi railed against him, saying he had just read *When We Dead Awaken* and had not liked it any better than the others. "If it was really what you described it to be in your article, it would be a good play."

At dinner he of course did not eat meat. When dinner was over he and I played chess. We played two games and I lost to him both times. He was as impulsive as a child. If he was caught napping he started and gasped just as a child would.

He was greatly agitated when I told him we had marked the opening of our new season by holding a prayer service to which we brought the icon of the Iverskaya Madonna. "What did you do that for?" he asked. I tried to excuse our young theatre by saying we had done it on the insistence of certain employees of the theatre, members of the Alexeyev family, and the owner of the building. We continued playing chess. Suddenly he interrupted the game by exclaiming: "Why in the world did you have to drag in that icon and hold a prayer service? A young theatre! Can't understand it."

A. I. Kuprin

Alexander Ivanovich Kuprin (1870-1938):
a Russian novelist and short story writer

MY MEETING WITH TOLSTOI ON THE STEAMBOAT "ST. NICHOLAS"

Not long ago I had the pleasure of talking with a man who, in early childhood, had seen Pushkin. He remembered nothing except that Pushkin was short, blond, ugly, restless and exceedingly embarrassed by all the attention paid him when he appeared in public. I assure you that I looked upon that man as a sort of wonder. In fifty or sixty years people will look upon those who saw Tolstoi alive (and long may he live!) as wonders. That is why I consider it my due to tell about meeting Tolstoi in the spring of 1905.

Sèrgei Yakovlevich Yelpatyevsky had informed me that Tolstoi was to leave Yalta on the following morning. I well remember the beautiful morning, the cheery breeze, the sparkling, restless sea and the *St. Nicholas*, which I boarded an hour before the arrival of Lev Nikolayevich. He arrived in a coach with the top up and drawn by two horses. The coach came to a halt. I saw an old man's leg encased in a high boot grope for the step, then slowly, in the manner of the aged, the old man came after the leg. He was wearing a rather short broadcloth coat, high boots and an old derby. These clothes, together with his grey hair tinged with green and his long flowing beard, made a comic and touching impression. He looked like one of those old Jews so often to be met with in the south-west of Russia.

I was introduced to him. I cannot say what colour his eyes were—I was too excited to notice at the time, and besides I attribute little importance to the colour of one's eyes. I remember the grip of his big, cold, stiff, old man's hand. I remember what a shock his appearance was to me: instead of a big and powerful sage resembling Michelangelo's Moses, I beheld a middle-sized old man with cautious and precise movements. I remember his thin, tired, old man's voice. On the whole he gave the impression of being very old and very ill. But I also remember how his faded tranquil eyes, with their sharp little pupils, unconsciously, by sheer force of habit, took in the deft movements of the sailors, the turning of the winches, the crowd on the dock, the sun, the sky, and the sea, and even, it seemed, the inner essence of all of us who were on the boat at the time.

A curious thing took place: Doctor Volkov, who had accompanied Tolstoi to the boat, was taken for Maxim Gorky because of the way he wore his hair, and all the people on the boat rushed after him. Tolstoi, apparently glad of a moment's freedom, took advantage of the opportunity to escape to the bow of the boat where Armenians, Tatars, pregnant women, workingmen, migrants and shabby priests were gathered, and I was witness to an extraordinary sight: without a word these people, who had not the faintest idea who he was, moved aside respectfully to make way for him. He advanced as a true monarch, aware that people must of necessity make way for him. I recalled a snatch of church music, the words of which ran: "Behold the king cometh in all his glory." I also recalled a charming story told by my mother (she was a Moscow lady to her finger-tips, and a Moscow lady of the old school) about having met Tolstoi walking down a Moscow bystreet on a beautiful winter's evening and seeing everyone who passed him doff cap or hat in a voluntary gesture of esteem. And I realized with striking force that the only power worthy of being bowed down to by human beings is the power exercised by a creative genius, a sweet and magic power voluntarily submitted to by all.

Five minutes passed. Other acquaintances of Tolstoi's boarded the boat and I saw another Tolstoi, a Tolstoi who became almost coquettish. Suddenly he was thirty years old, with a firm voice, bright eyes and society manners. With great taste and restraint he told the following story:

"As you know, I was ill recently, and during my illness a deputation came from somewhere or other—I think it was from the Tambov Gubernia. Unable to receive them in my room, they presented themselves at the window, and among them was ... hm, do you remember the fat lady from my *Fruits of Enlightenment*?—perhaps you've read it? Well, it was just such a lady who came up to the window and said, 'My dear Lev Nikolayevich, allow me to convey to you our boundless gratitude for the immortal works with which you have enriched Russian literature.' I could see by her face she hadn't read a thing I had ever written, so I said to her: 'Which of them do you like particularly?' No answer. People whispered in her ear: '*War and Peace*, *Childhood* and *Boyhood*.' She turned red as a beet, blinked her eyes and stammered: '*Warlike Peace* ... *The Childhood of* ... *er*. ...' "

Just then some Englishmen came up and again Tolstoi underwent a change: this time he was the reserved, correct European aristocrat, making a display of his faultless English pronunciation.

These, at least, were the impressions I got from observing him for ten or fifteen minutes. I do not doubt but that his true character would have proved just as elusive had I observed him for several years running.

But in those few minutes I realized what a great joy and inspiration it was to be living at the same time as this extraordinary man. And I realized the wonder and nobility of sharing with him his humanity, and the privilege of thinking and writing in the same rich Russian language as he did. And I also realized that this man, creator of the fascinating Natasha, the curly-headed Vaska Denisov, the old gelding Yardstick, the dog Milka, the horse Fru-Fru, the dashing, heartless Dolokhov, the "smooth" Platon Karatayev; this man who re-created for us Napoleon with his jerking leg muscles, and a whole gallery of freemasons, soldiers, Cossacks (among them the delightful Uncle Yeroshka, smelling pleasantly of blood and tobacco and drink)—that this many-sided writer, possessed of a mysterious power to make us laugh and cry and become ecstatic, is a true monarch whose power, like the creative power of God, will remain through the ages, when neither we, nor our children, nor our children's children will be on this earth.

These were approximately the thoughts that passed through my mind between the second and third warning bells, before the clumsy freighter *St. Nicholas* drew away from the dock at Yalta.

I remember one more amusing and touching detail. As I was going down the gangplank I met the captain of the ship, with whom I was not acquainted.

"Do you know who you have on board?" I asked him.

His face instantly broke into a joyful smile, he seized my hand and gave it a quick squeeze (he was in a great hurry) and cried:

"Of course: Tolstoi!"

The name was like a magic word uniting people of all latitudes and longitudes:

"Of course: Tolstoi!"

From the bottom of my loving and grateful heart I wish him long years of healthy and happy life. I trust that he, like a good husbandman who has planted and tended a vast orchard for the joy and benefit of all mankind, may contemplate for long, in the twilight of his days, the golden fruits of his labour.

V. V. Veresayev

V. Veresayev was the pseudonym of Vikenti Vikentyevich Smidovich (1867-1945): writer, critic and translator

LEV TOLSTOI

Every time he returned from a visit to Yasnaya Polyana, Lev Pavlovich Nikiforov, a wonderful old man and good friend of Tolstoi's, brought me an invitation from Tolstoi to visit him. But I was terrified by the thought and kept putting the visit off. At last, in August 1903, I screwed up my courage and went.

Three of us set out together: an official of liberal views named G. who served in the local Land Administration, a rural doctor of my acquaintance, and I. We left Tula by coach at 11 o'clock in the morning. I read on my companions' faces the same feelings that had taken possession of me: fear and joyous anticipation and an almost religious awe. The closer we got to Yasnaya Polyana the paler and more agitated became our faces and the more excited were we.

A house appeared among the trees and our coach made for the entrance. Sophia Andreyevna, still bearing traces of what had once been great beauty, came out to meet us cordially. We followed her to the lower verandah where the family were having coffee.

"Lev Nikolayevich has returned from his walk," somebody said.

My heart leaped. Presently another announcement:

"He has gone to have a rest."

And an hour or so later:

"He has got up and is coming here."

My heart pounded harder than ever it had in my youth before taking a difficult examination. I could hardly breathe. We heard quick light steps. Lev Nikolayevich came out on the verandah. The first thing that struck me was that he was so small. I had imagined him to be tall and broad-shouldered. He was a small wizened old man with a stoop but, despite his recent illness, with quick and youthful movements. He shook hands with us and sat down. I was impressed by the exceptional beauty of his aged hands.

The next moment I got the impression that, with the habitual gesture of an experienced driver, he took the reins of conversation into those hands and directed it according to his will, drawing everybody into it easily and unobtrusively. He spoke to me of my *Notes*, then turned to the rural doctor and said:

"No doubt you disagree with Vikenti Vikentyevich on many questions?"

The doctor frowned and replied defiantly from where he was sitting in the corner:

"Yes, I do."

It was as if Tolstoi were receiving old acquaintances rather than people he was seeing for the first time. He asked us our names and patronymics and not once thereafter did he forget or confuse them. He listened to us with lively attention, as if we, personally, were of interest to him. The charm of his manner was the result of a happy combination of good breeding and a consciousness that every man was his brother. And yet it seems to me there was more to it than that—that he really did take an interest in each one of us. And how could he help taking a real interest in anyone he met, he who had such a thirst to know all and every manifestation of life, be it a distant star or an insect crawling along the ground? I remembered the words of Pascal: "The more intelligent a man is, the more interesting he finds the people among whom he moves. A man of limited abilities does not distinguish the differences in people."

We were called to dinner. We went upstairs. As we were climbing the stairs, Tolstoi said to me:

"Are you married?"

"Yes."

"Have you children?"

"No."

Tolstoi frowned.

"Have you been married long?"

"Six years."

He made no comment, but a hard look came into his eyes and I was aware of a sharp and sudden change in his attitude towards me. He continued to be polite and gracious, but the warmth went out of his eyes.

He asked me why I lived in Tula. I replied that I had been forced to leave St. Petersburg by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Tolstoi breathed a sigh and said enviously:

"I have never been forced to leave any place and have never been put in jail—I never had that happiness."

After dinner Lev Nikolayevich suggested that we should take a walk. The weather was clear and sunny; puddles of yesterday's rain glistened in the ruts of the dry road. Lev Nikolayevich strode along with a light step, his long white beard stirred by the breeze. He spoke of the importance of constantly striving toward self-perfection, and of the happiness which love brings.

"But what if a person does not have love within him?" I asked. "He may admit intellectually that the highest happiness lies in love, and yet not have it, may never feel a spontaneous urge to love. That is the greatest tragedy a person can experience."

Tolstoi shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't understand you," he said. "If a person realizes that happiness lies in love he will live in love. If I am in a dark room and see light in the adjoining one, what can keep me from going toward the light if it is light I need?"

"But the heroes of your own novels show us it is not as simple as all that, Lev Nikolayevich. Olenin, Levin, Nekhlyudov—all of them see plainly enough where the light is, yet they have not the strength to reach it."

But Tolstoi made another gesture expressing his lack of comprehension. Evidently he truly wanted to understand the "tragedy" I spoke of; he asked questions and listened gravely and attentively to what I said, but in the end he replied:

"Sorry, but I simply don't understand."

It seemed to me that Tolstoi, of all people, ought to have understood. In what lay the tragedy of all his "seekers after the truth" if not in their inability to live lives of goodness despite their conviction that happiness lay only in living such lives?

Among other things I recounted to Lev Nikolayevich the story of a young girl of my acquaintance who slowly, surely and irrevocably brought about her own death so that she might save the life of her dear friend. It turned out she could not save her, but she sacrificed her frail health, her beloved occupation and dear ties—sacrificed them without hesitation, without so much as asking herself whether the object was worth the sacrifice. I told Tolstoi the story with the naive assumption that he would sympathize: did he not insistently teach that true love operates without knowing or desiring to know the end to which it is the means? Was it not he who told with such feeling the legend of Buddha, who fed the starving tigress and her cubs with his own body?

And suddenly—suddenly I saw Tolstoi make a grimace of impatience, almost of pain, as if he could not breathe. Again he shrugged his shoulders and exclaimed under his breath:

"Of all the absurdities!"

I was completely baffled. But one thing was clear to me: if Tolstoi should see a Hindu fanatic feeding a starving tigress with his own body he would see in such an act a mere mockery of life and would feel stifled, like one locked up in a coffin.

The very word "tragedy" seemed to grate on his ear like the scraping of a nail upon glass.

"Tragedy!" he murmured caustically. "Turgenev used to come and repeat the same word: traa-gedy, traa-gedy!"

He pronounced it in a way that made me, somewhere deep down inside of me, feel ashamed of myself, and gave rise to a preposterous question: is there really any such thing as tragedy in life? Is it not sheer pretence?

Presently Tolstoi spoke of Mechnikov's book *Essai de la philosophie optimiste* which had been sent to him. He spoke contemptuously and indignantly of it and of the "ignorance" Mechnikov displayed.

"He, Professor Mechnikov, would like . . . to improve on nature. He knows better than nature what we need and what we do not need. The Chinese have a word '*shu*,' which means 'respect.' Not respect for any particular person or thing, but simply respect—respect for all persons and all things. Respect for that burdock there by the fence because it grows, for that cloud in the sky, for that dirty road with puddles in the ruts. . . . Will we ever learn to have that sort of respect for life?"

My companion of the Land Administration went out into the hall and came back carrying issues of a new magazine called *Osvobozhdeniye* which was being published abroad under the editorship of P. B. Struve.

"Very interesting," said Tolstoi. "Thank you. I shall be sure to read it."

He leafed through one of the numbers while G. told him the aims and plans of the magazine.

"Political freedom!" said Tolstoi with a disparaging wave of his hand. "Utterly unnecessary and unimportant. The important thing is moral self-perfection and love—that is what brings about the brotherhood of man, and not freedom."

G. began to object in a condescending tone.

"But you must concede, Lev Nikolayevich, that political freedom is essential, if for no other reason than to preach that very love of which you speak."

And with an air of respectful indulgence and the condescension with which a grown-up might speak to a very sweet but rather dull child, he explained to Tolstoi self-evident truths about the advantages of political freedom. How incredibly stupid! Could he really have imagined that Tolstoi had never before heard the arguments he put forth, or that he could be convinced by such banalities? And the tone in which he addressed him!—so repulsively self-complacent and condescending! Suddenly the liberal-minded gentleman was annihilated—reduced to thin air. It was as if he had evaporated. Tolstoi no longer saw him; he switched the topic of conversation to something else.

But no matter what the topic of conversation, Tolstoi inevitably brought it round to a statement of the necessity of moral self-perfection and love for one's fellow-men.

When returning from abroad in the spring of 1907, I travelled from Warsaw in the same compartment as a gentleman who turned out to be M. S. Sukhotin, Tolstoi's son-in-law. . . . Naturally we talked a great deal about Tolstoi. At that time I was writing my book about Dostoyevsky and Tolstoi, called *Vital Living*. Among other things I told Sukhotin my interpretation of Tolstoi's epigraph to *Anna Karenina*: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." This novel reflects Tolstoi's most profound moral convictions, his unshakeable belief that life in its essence is good and joyful and unerringly points the way to harmony and happiness, and that man himself is to blame if he does not follow in this way. After marrying Karenin, Anna became a mother but never a wife. She gave herself to him without love, whereas only love can bring joy and happiness; to give oneself without love means to turn the relationship into something dirty, false and shameful. Vital living does not tolerate such a thing. A force seemingly independent of Anna—she herself was aware of this—tore her away from all the ugliness of her life and hurled her towards a new love. Had Anna given herself up to this force wholely and completely, a new and purposeful life would have been opened up to her. But Anna was frightened. She was frightened by what people would say, and by the thought of losing her place in society. And so her deep and pure feeling was sullied by pretence, became transformed into a forbidden indulgence, shallow and impure. For Anna there was nothing left but love; she became solely a mistress, just as formerly she had been solely a mother. But she could not be satisfied with anything but this unnatural and sterile love. Vital living does not tolerate this either. The shame and duality of her life gradually killed the living spirit within her. And here we must silently bow our heads before the justice meted out by the highest judge: if a person does not respond to the joyful and mysterious voice of his heart, if he lacks the courage to take the highest happiness life has to offer, who is to blame if he perishes in darkness and suffering? If he is so foolish as to go against the very essence of his being, a great law, just in its very cruelty, says: "Vengence is mine; I will repay."

Sukhotin's eyes shone.

"That is an original interpretation. It will be interesting to tell it to Lev Nikolayevich and see how he accepts it."

"I will take you up on this, Mikhail Sergeyevich," I said. "Please do tell him and then write me his opinion. I do not doubt but that Tolstoi had something quite different in mind when he chose this epigraph for his novel, but still I am frightfully curious to hear what he says."

Sukhotin tried to beat a retreat, saying Lev Nikolayevich always avoided talking about his works of fiction, but in the end I got him to promise to speak to him and write to me.

A month later I received his letter:

Yasnaya Polyana
May 23, 1907

"My dear Vikenti Vikentyevich,

"Please do not think I forgot to speak to Lev Nikolayevich about his epigraph to *Anna Karenina*. I simply had difficulty in finding a fitting opportunity since, as I explained to you, Lev Nikolayevich does not like to talk about his works of fiction. Only a few days ago did I find a fitting moment to ask him about 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.' Unfortunately his reply proved that I was right and you were wrong. I say 'unfortunately' because I like your interpretation much better than Lev Nikolayevich's, and so does he. At any rate, when he asked me why I was so curious to know his interpretation and I told him your version he said: 'Very clever, very clever indeed, but I must repeat what I have already told you, that in selecting the quotation, the thought I wished to express was that all the wrong people do entails bitter consequences, and that these consequences come not from man but from God, and that Anna Karenina was made to suffer these consequences. Yes, I remember it was just this I wished to express.'

"Mikhail Sukhotin"

Maxim Gorky

LEV TOLSTOI

This book is composed of random notes made by me when living in Oleiz, Lev Tolstoi then being in Gaspra, at first seriously ill, later recuperating from his illness. I considered these notes, jotted down carelessly on all sorts of scraps of paper, as lost, but lately discovered some of them. I have included also an unfinished letter written by me under the impression of Tolstoi's "departure" from Yasnaya Polyana, and his death. I give the letter exactly as it was written, without altering a word. And I have not finished it, for I cannot.

NOTES

1

Clearly the idea that destroys his peace of mind more frequently than any other, is the idea of God. Sometimes this seems to be not an idea, but a tense resistance to something by which he feels he is dominated. He does not speak about it as much as he would like to, but thinks about it continually. I don't think this is a sign of age, or due to a presentiment of death, more likely it comes from a fine human pride. A little from a sense of injury, too, perhaps—that he, Lev Tolstoi, must shame-fully submit to the will of some streptococcus. If he were a naturalist, he would undoubtedly have created brilliant hypotheses, made great discoveries.

2

His hands are marvellous—ugly, disfigured by swollen veins, and yet extraordinarily expressive, full of creative force. Probably Leonardo da Vinci had hands like that. Anything could be done by such hands. Sometimes, when talking, he moves his fingers, gradually flexing and suddenly unflexing them, while uttering some splendid weighty word. He is like a god, not the Lord of Sabaoth or a god from Olympus, but like some Russian god, "seated on a throne of maple wood, beneath a golden lime-tree," and though he may not be so very majestic, perhaps he is more cunning than all the other gods.

3

He has an almost feminine tenderness for Sulerzhitsky. For Chekhov he has a paternal affection, the pride of the creator may be felt in this love, but his feeling for Suler is tenderness, unceasing interest and an admiration which never seems to weary the wizard. There may be something a little absurd in this feeling, like the love of an old maid for her parrot, her pug or her puss. Suler is like some wondrous free bird from a strange, unknown land. A hundred such people as he would be capable of changing the face and the soul of some provincial town. Its face they would shatter, its soul they would imbue with a passion for restless, defiant genius. It is easy and pleasant to love Suler, and when I see how women neglect him, I am astonished and furious. But perhaps there is cleverly concealed caution beneath this neglect. There is no depending on Suler. What will he be up to tomorrow? Perhaps he'll throw a bomb, or join a choir of tavern singers. There is enough energy in him for three eras. He has so much of the fire of life in him that he seems to sweat sparks, like a red-hot iron.

But once he was very angry with Suler—Leopold (Sulerzhitsky.—*Tr.)*, always inclined to anarchy, was fond of arguing hotly about the freedom of the individual, and L. N. always made fun of him when he did this.

I remember Sulerzhitsky once got hold of a slender pamphlet by Prince Kropotkin and, roused to enthusiasm by it, held forth the whole day to all and sundry on the wisdom of anarchy, philosophizing in the most excruciating manner.

"Oh, stop it, Lyovushka, I'm tired of it!" said L. N. crossly. "You're like a parrot repeating the one word—freedom, freedom, and what does it really mean? Supposing you were to get freedom in your sense of the word, as you conceive it—what would be the result? Philosophically speaking—a bottomless void, while in life, in practice, you would become an idler, a mendicant. If you were free according to your conception, what would there be to bind you to life, to human beings? Look—the birds are free, but they build nests. You would not go in for building a nest, you would just satisfy your sexual instincts wherever you found yourself, like a tom-cat. Only think seriously for a moment and you will see, you will feel, that in the ultimate sense of the word freedom is a void, a vacuum, mere formless space."

Knitting his brows angrily, he paused for a moment and added more gently:

"Christ was free, and so was Buddha, and they both took on themselves the sins of the world, voluntarily entered the prison of earthly life. And nobody has ever gone further than that—nobody! You and I—what have we done? We all seek freedom from our duty to our neighbour, although it is precisely this sense of duty which has made human beings of us, and but for this sense of duty we should live like the animals. . . ."

He chuckled.

"And yet we are now arguing about how to live nobly. Not much comes from this, but at the same time not a little. Look! You argue with me till you are black in the face, but you don't strike me, you don't even swear at me. If you really felt yourself to be free, you would slaughter me—that's all."

And after another pause, he added:

"Freedom—that would mean that everything and everyone agree with me, but then I would no longer exist, for we are only conscious of ourselves in conflict and opposition."

4

Goldenweiser played Chopin, drawing the following thoughts from Lev Nikolayevich:

"Some German princeling said: 'If you would have slaves, you must compose as much music as possible.' This is a just reflection, a faithful observation—music dulls the mind. No one understands this so well as the Catholics—our spiritual fathers could never reconcile themselves to Mendelssohn in the church, of course. A Tula priest assured me that Christ himself was not a Jew, although he was the son of a Hebrew god and his mother was a Hebrew woman. He admitted this, but nevertheless declared: 'It is impossible.' 'What then?' I asked him. He shrugged his shoulders and said: 'This is a mystery to me.' "

5

"If anyone was an intellectual, it was Prince Vladimirko of Galich. As long ago as the 12th century he was daring enough to say: 'The time for miracles has passed.' Since then six hundred years have elapsed, and the intellectuals keep on assuring one another: 'There are no miracles.' But the people believe in miracles just as they used to in the 12th century."

6

"The minority need God because they have everything else, the majority, because they have nothing."

Or rather I would say: the majority believe in God out of cowardice, and only the few from fulness of soul.*

"Do you like Hans Andersen's fairy-tales?" he asked thoughtfully. "I did not understand them when they were published in Marko Vovchok's translation, but ten years later I picked up the book and read them again, and suddenly I realized quite clearly that Hans Andersen was a lonely man. Very lonely. I know nothing about his life. He was a confirmed rake and wanderer, I believe, but that only strengthens my conviction that he was a lonely man. And therefore he turned to the children, believing (but this was an error) that children have more compassion for others than grown-ups have. Children pity no one, they don't know what pity means."

7

He advised me to read the Buddhist Catechism. There is always something sentimental in the way he talks about Christ and Buddhism—there is neither enthusiasm nor pathos in his words, not a single spark of the heart's fire. I think he considers Christ naive, worthy of pity, and though he admires him in some ways, it is unlikely that he loves him. And he seems to be afraid that if Christ were to come to a Russian village the girls would laugh at him.

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* To avoid misinterpretation I would state that I regard religious writings as purely literary; the lives of Buddha, Christ, Mohammed, as imaginative fiction.—*Author's note.*

8

Grand Duke Nikolai Mikhailovich, who seems to be a clever man, was there today. His bearing is modest, and he does not say much. He has nice eyes and a good figure. His gestures are restrained. L. N. smiled at him, talking sometimes in French, sometimes in English. In Russian he said:

"Karamzin wrote for the tsar, Solovyov wrote lengthily and tediously, and Klyuchevsky wrote for his own pleasure. He was a deep one, at first you think he is praising, but when you look deeper, you realize he is cursing."

Someone mentioned Zabelin.

"Very nice. A kind of petty official. A lover of antiques, he collects everything indiscriminately. He describes food as if he had never had enough to eat. But he's very, very amusing."

9

He reminds one of those pilgrims who pace the earth, their staves in their hands, their whole lives, covering thousands of miles from monastery to monastery, from shrine to shrine, terribly homeless, alien to everyone and everything. The world is not for them—nor God, either. They pray to Him from habit, but in their secret hearts they hate Him: why does He drive them over the world, to the ends of the earth—why? They regard human beings as mere stumps, roots, stones lying in the road—

one stumbles over them, and sometimes hurts oneself against them. One could do without them, but it is sometimes pleasant to astonish people by one's unlikeness to them, to flaunt one's disagreement with them.

10

"Frederick the Great said a clever thing: 'Everyone must save his soul *à sa façon*.' And it was he who said: 'Think what you like, but obey.' Dying, he admitted: 'I am weary of ruling slaves.' The so-called great are always extremely self-contradictory. This is forgiven them, along with all sorts of other follies. But after all, to contradict oneself is not folly: a fool is stubborn, but never contradicts himself. Yes, Frederick was a queer man—the Germans regarded him as their best emperor, and yet he could not bear them, he did not even like Goethe and Wieland...."

11

"Romanticism is the fear of looking the truth in the eyes," he said last night, speaking of Balmont's poems. Suler did not agree with him, and read some of them with great feeling, lisping in his agitation.

"That's not poetry, Lyovushka, it's charlatanism, nonsense, mere senseless word-spinning. Poetry is artless. When Fet wrote:

What I will sing, I know not,
But my song will swell within me,

he expressed the true feeling of the people about poetry. The muzhik, too, knows not what he sings; he just sings oh! and ah! and ai-da-mi! and out comes a true song, straight from the soul, as the birds sing. Your new poets do nothing but invent. You know there are idiotic things called '*articles de Paris*,' and that's what your poetasters are busy making. Nekrasov did nothing but invent his doggerel."

"What about Béranger?" asked Suler.

"Béranger's different. What have we and the French in common? They are hedonists—the life of the soul is not so important for them as the life of the flesh. The most important thing for a Frenchman is woman. They are a worn-out, bedraggled nation. The doctors say all consumptives are sensualists."

Suler started arguing with his usual outspokenness, spluttering out a multitude of words at random. L. N. looked at him and said, smiling broadly:

"Today you're as peevish as a young lady ripe for marriage, when there's no suitor in sight. . . ."

12

His illness has dried him up, has burned up something within him, and he seems to have become lighter, more transparent, more adapted to life, inwardly. His eyes have become keener, his glance more penetrating. He listens attentively and seems to be remembering something long forgotten, or waiting confidently for something new, hitherto unknown. At Yasnaya Polyana he had appeared to me like a man who knew all there was to know, who had found answers to all his questions.

13

If he were a fish his home would certainly be the ocean, he would never swim in inland seas, still less in rivers. A roach is darting around; what he says cannot interest it, it does not need it, and his silence does not frighten it or affect it in any way. And he knows how to be silent very imposingly and ably, like a real hermit. True, he speaks a great deal on the subjects that obsess him, but one feels there is still more that he does not say. There are things he cannot say to anybody. He probably has thoughts which he fears.

14

Someone sent him an amusing version of the story of the boy baptized by Christ. He read the story to Suler and Chekhov with great gusto—read it wonderfully! He was particularly amused by the way the imps tormented the landowners, and there was something in this which I did not quite like. He is incapable of insincerity, but if this is sincere, so much the worse.

Then he said:

"Look how well the muzhiks tell stories. Everything simple, few words, and lots of feeling. True wisdom is always laconical—like 'Lord have mercy upon us.' "

But it is a ferocious story.

15

His interest in me is ethnographical. For him I am a member of a tribe of which he knows very little—nothing more.

16

I read him my story *The Bull*. He laughed a great deal and praised me for knowing "the tricks of language."

"But you don't know how to use words, all your muzhiks express themselves very grandly. In real life muzhiks speak stupidly, awkwardly, at first you can't tell what they're trying to say. That's done on purpose, the desire to lead the other man on is always concealed beneath the apparent stupidity of their words. A true muzhik never shows what's on his mind straight away, that wouldn't suit him. He knows people approach a stupid person simply and guilelessly, and that's just what he wants. You stand revealed before him, he sees all your weak spots at once. He is mistrustful, he is afraid to tell his secret thoughts even to his wife. But in your stories everything is straightforward, there is a collection of wiseacres in every story. And they speak in aphorisms, that's not right, either—aphorisms do not suit the Russian language."

"And what about proverbs, sayings?"

"That's different. They weren't invented the day before yesterday."

"You yourself often speak in aphorisms."

"Never! And then you try to embellish everything—people and nature, especially people. Leskov did, too, he was high-flown and affected, people have long stopped reading him. Don't give in to anyone, don't be afraid of anyone—then you'll be all right. . . ."

17

I was struck by a strange saying in the diary he gave me to read: "God is my desire."

When I returned it to him today, I asked him what he meant.

"An unfinished thought," he said, screwing up his eyes as he looked at the page. "I must have wanted to say—God is my desire to grasp what he is. . . . No, not that. . . ." He laughed, rolled the notebook and thrust it into the wide pocket of his smock. His relations with God are indefinite, sometimes they remind me of "two bears in one lair."

18

On science:

"Science is a gold ingot concocted by a charlatan-alchemist. You want to simplify it, to make it comprehensible to everyone—in other words, to coin any amount of false money. When the people realize the true value of this money they will not thank you for it."

19

We were walking in Yusupov Park. He discoursed brilliantly on the morals of the Moscow aristocracy. A big Russian wench was working almost doubled over on a flower-bed, showing her elephantine legs, her enormous, heavy breasts shaking. He looked at her attentively.

"All this splendour and extravagance was supported by caryatids like that. Not merely by the work of muzhiks and peasant wenches, not by quitrent, but literally by the blood of the people. If the aristocracy had not from time to time coupled with mares like this, it would long ago have died out. Strength cannot be expended, as it was by the young men of my day, with impunity. But after sowing their wild oats many of them married peasant lasses and produced good offspring. So here, too, the muzhik strength came to the rescue. It comes in handy everywhere. Half a generation always wastes its strength on its own pleasures, and the other half mixes its blood with the thick blood of the country people, so as to dilute it a little, too. That's good for the race."

20

He is very fond of talking about women, like a French novelist, but always with that coarseness of the Russian muzhik which used to grate on my ears. Walking in the almond copse today, he asked Chekhov:

"Were you very dissipated in your youth?"

A. P. smiled sheepishly and muttered something, tugging at his beard, and Tolstoi admitted, looking out to sea:

"I was an indefatigable—"

He said this regretfully, using a salty country word at the end of the sentence. And I noticed for the first time that he uttered this word quite simply, as if he knew no worthy substitute for it. And all such words sound quite simple and ordinary, coming from his bearded lips, losing in their passage their soldier-like coarseness and filth. I recall my first meeting with him and what he said to me about *Varenka Olesova* and *Twenty-Six Men and One Girl*. From the ordinary point of view his speech was a stream of "obscenities." I was taken aback and even offended, believing that he considered me incapable of understanding any other sort of language. Now I see it was foolish of me to have been offended.

21

He was sitting on a stone bench beneath the cypresses, shrivelled, small, grey, and yet like the Lord of Sabaoth, a little weary and trying to distract himself by imitating the warbling of a finch. The bird was singing in the dark-green foliage, and Tolstoi was peering into the leaves, narrowing his small, keen eyes, thrusting out his lips like a baby and whistling tunelessly.

"The little thing is working itself into a frenzy! Just listen to it! What bird is it?"

I spoke about the finch and the jealousy of these birds.

"Only one song their whole life long—and jealous! Man has hundreds of songs in his heart, and he is blamed for giving way to jealousy—is that fair?" he said thoughtfully, as if asking himself the question. "There are moments when a man tells a woman more about himself than she ought to know. Afterwards he forgets he has told her, but she remembers. Perhaps jealousy comes from the fear of lowering oneself, the fear of being humiliated and appearing ridiculous. It's not the wench who takes hold of your— who is dangerous, but the one who takes hold of the soul."

When I said that there was something inconsistent with *The Kreutzer Sonata* in this, a radiant smile spread all over his beard. "I'm not a finch," he answered.

While walking in the evening he suddenly said:

"A man goes through earthquakes, epidemics, the horrors of disease, and all sorts of spiritual torments, but the most agonizing tragedy he ever knows always has been and always will be—the tragedy of the bedroom."

He brought this out with a triumphant smile—sometimes he has the broad, serene smile of a man who has overcome something excessively difficult or who has long been suffering from a gnawing pain which suddenly vanishes. Every thought burrows into his soul like a tick. He either pulls it out at once or allows it to suck its fill, till it falls off of itself, replete.

Another time, in the middle of an absorbing discourse on stoicism he suddenly frowned, clucked and said sternly:

"Quilted, not stitched...."

These words had obviously not the slightest reference to the philosophy of the stoics. Observing my astonishment he said rapidly, nodding towards the door leading into the next room: "They keep saying—a stitched counterpane."

And then he went on: "That Renan ... sugary chatterbox."

He often told me: "You relate things well—in your own words, with conviction, not bookishly."

But he almost always noted carelessness in speech, saying under his breath, as if to himself:

"Uses a good Russian word, and then a word like 'absolutely,'* in the same sentence."

Sometimes he would chide me: "You combine words which are utterly different in spirit—never do that!"

His sensitiveness to the forms of speech seemed to me—sometimes—morbidly acute. Once he said:

"I came across the words 'cat' and 'guts' in the same sentence in a book—revolting! It almost made me sick."

"I can't bear philologists," he would say, "they're all dry-as-dust scholars, but there is a great work on language before them. We use words we do not understand. We have no idea of the way in which many of our verbs have come into being."

He was fond of speaking of Dostoyevsky's language:

"He wrote abominably, he made his style ugly on purpose—on purpose, I'm sure, out of affectation. He loved to show off—in *The Idiot* you will find the words 'cheek,' 'swank,' 'ostentatious familiarity,' all jumbled together. I think he enjoyed mixing up colloquial Russian words with words of foreign derivation. But you will find unpardonable lapses in his writing. The Idiot says: 'The ass is a worthy and useful person,' but nobody laughs, although these words could not fail to arouse laughter, or at least some remark. He says this in front of three sisters who loved to make fun of him, especially Aglaya. The book is considered bad, but its chief blemish is that Prince Myshkin is an epileptic. If he were a healthy man his genuine naïveté, his purity of heart would touch us deeply. But Dostoyevsky had not the courage to make him a healthy man. Besides, he didn't like healthy people. He was convinced that, since he was himself a sick man, the whole world was sick. . . ."

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* Tolstoi refers to the word *absolutno*, in which the Russian adverbial ending *no* is tacked on to a foreign word.

He read Suler and me a version of the scene of the fall of Father Sergius—a ruthless scene. Suler pouted and wriggled in his excitement.

"What's the matter? Don't you like it?" asked L. N.

"It's really too cruel, it's just like Dostoyevsky. That putrid girl, and her pancake-like breasts, and all that! Why couldn't he have sinned with a beautiful, healthy woman?"

"That would have been a sin with no justification—this way his pity for the girl could be pleaded—nobody else would take her, poor thing."

"I don't understand...."

"You don't understand a great deal, Lyovushka, there's no guile in you...."

The wife of Andrei Lvovich came in and the conversation was broken off, and when she and Suler went to the annex L. N. said to me:

"Lyovushka is the purest man I know. He's like that himself—if he does wrong, it's out of pity for someone."

22

His favourite subjects of conversation are God, the peasant and woman. Of literature he speaks seldom and little, as if it were an alien subject to him. And his attitude to women, as far as I can see, is one of obstinate hostility. There is nothing he likes so much as to punish them—unless they are just ordinary women like Kitty and Natasha Rostova. Is it the revenge of a man who has not obtained as much happiness as he was capable of, or an enmity of the spirit towards the "humiliating impulses of the flesh"? Whatever it is, it is hostility, and very bitter, as in *Anna Karenina*. He talked very well of the "humiliating impulses of the flesh" on Sunday, discussing Rousseau's *Confessions* with Chekhov and Yelpatyevsky. Suler jotted down his words, but later, while making coffee, burned his notes in the flame of the spirit lamp. Before that, he had burned L. N.'s remarks about Ibsen, and lost his notes on the symbolism of marriage rites, about which L. N. had made some extremely pagan comments, here and there coinciding with those of V. V. Rozanov.

23

Some Stundists from Feodosia were here this morning, and all day he has been talking enthusiastically about muzhiks.

At lunch he said:

"You should have seen them—both so robust and sturdy. One of them said: 'We have come unbidden,' and the other: 'May we leave unchidden!' " And he fairly shook with childish laughter.

After lunch, on the verandah:

"We shall soon stop understanding the language of the people altogether. Now we speak of the 'theory of progress,' 'the role of the individual in history,' the 'evolution of science,' 'dysentery,' and the muzhik says: 'It's no use looking for a needle in a haystack,' and all the theories, and history and evolution become useless, ridiculous, because the muzhik does not understand them, does not require them. But the muzhik is stronger than we are and has more staying power, and we may (who knows?) share the fate of the Atsuri tribe, of whom some scholar was told: 'All the Atsuris perished, but there is still a parrot which knows a few words of their language.' "

24

"Woman is physically more sincere than man, but her thoughts are false. When she lies she does not believe herself, while Rousseau both lied and believed."

25

"Dostoyevsky wrote of one of his insane characters that all his life he punished himself and others because he had served that which he did not believe in. He wrote that about himself, or rather he could easily have said it about himself."

26

"Some Biblical sayings are extremely obscure—what, for example, do the words: 'The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof' mean? They have nothing to do with the Scriptures, they smack of popular-scientific materialism."

"You have commented on the sense of these words somewhere," said Suler.

"What if I have.... Sense there may be, but I didn't get to the bottom of it."

And he gave a cunning smile.

27

He loves to put sly, embarrassing questions:

"What do you think of yourself?"

"Do you love your wife?"

"Do you consider my son Lev talented?"

"Do you like Sophia Andreyevna?"

It is impossible to lie to him.

Once he asked:

"Do you love me, Alexei Maximovich?"

This is the playfulness of a Russian *bogatyr**—Vasily Buslayev, the Novgorod daredevil, indulged in such play. He tries first one thing, then another, as if preparing for a fight. This is interesting, but I can't say I care for it. He is a devil, and I am still but an infant, he ought to let me alone.

---

* Legendary Russian hero of gigantic stature and strength.

28

Perhaps the muzhik is simply a bad smell for him, which he can never forget and feels compelled to talk about.

Last night I told him about my skirmish with the widow of General Cornet, and he laughed till he cried, laughed till it hurt, groaned and kept exclaiming in a shrill voice:

"With a spade! On her—! With a spade, eh? Right on her—! Was it a big spade?"

Then, after a moment's pause, he said gravely:

"You were too kind—another man in your place would have bashed her over the head. Too kind. Did you understand she wanted you?"

"I don't remember. I don't think I did."

"Of course she did. It's perfectly obvious. Of course she did."

"That didn't interest me then."

"Never mind what interested you. You're not a ladies' man, that's obvious. Another man would have made his fortune by it, become a house-owner and caroused with her for the rest of his life."

After a pause:

"You're a queer chap! Don't be offended. You're very queer. And the funny thing is that you are good-natured, though you have a perfect right to be vindictive. Yes, you might have turned out vindictive. You're strong, that's very good. . . ."

And, pausing once more, he added meditatively:

"I don't understand your mind. It's a very confused mind, but your heart is wise ... yes, you have a wise heart."

NOTE: When I lived in Kazan I worked as yardman and gardener for the widow of General Cornet. She was French, a fat young woman with spindly, schoolgirl legs. Her eyes were exceedingly beautiful, very restless, always wide open and avid-looking. I believe she had been a shopgirl or a cook before her marriage, perhaps even a *fille de joie*. She began drinking in the morning and would go out into the yard or the garden with nothing but a chemise under her orange-coloured dressing-gown, in Tatar slippers of red morocco, her thick mane of hair pinned on the top of her head. It was very carelessly fastened and kept falling down her rosy cheeks and on to her shoulders. A young witch. She used to walk about the garden singing French songs, watching me work, and going up to the kitchen window every now and then and saying:

"Give me something, Pauline!"

"Something" was invariably one and the same thing—a glass of iced wine.

The three orphan Princesses D. G. occupied the ground floor of the house, their father, a Commissary General, was always away, and their mother was dead. The widow had taken a dislike to the young ladies and did her best to make life miserable for them by playing all sorts of dirty tricks on them. She spoke Russian badly, but could swear to a marvel, like a regular drayman. I was disgusted with the way she treated the poor girls—they were so mournful, so intimidated, so defenceless. Once, at about midday, two of them were walking about the garden, when suddenly the General's lady appeared, drunk as usual, and began shouting at them and driving them out of the garden. They started to go without a word, but Madame Cornet stood at the gate, barring the way with her person, and letting out a stream of imprecations in Russian fit to stagger a horse. I told her to stop swearing and let the girls pass, and she shouted:

"I know you! You get in at their window in the night. . . ."

I lost my temper, took her by the shoulders and pushed her away from the gate, but she shook loose, turned her face towards me and yelled, suddenly throwing open her dressing-gown and lifting her chemise:

"I'm nicer than those skinny rats."

Then I lost my temper in good earnest, wheeled her round and hit her with my spade on her bottom, so that she rushed through the gate into the yard, exclaiming three times, in tremendous astonishment: "Oh! Oh! Oh!"

After this I got back my passport from her housekeeper Pauline, also a drunken wench, but extremely artful, took my bundle under my arm and departed, while the General's lady, standing at the window with a red handkerchief in her hand, shouted after me:

"I won't call the police—never mind—listen! Come back! Don't be afraid. . . ."

29

I asked him:

"Do you agree with Poznyshev that the doctors have killed and are still killing people by the hundred thousand?"

"And do you want to know very badly?"

"I do."

"Then I won't tell you."

And he chuckled, twiddling his thumbs.

I remember a comparison in one of his stories of a village horseleech and a medical practitioner:

"Aren't the words 'sap,' 'haemorrhoids,' 'bleed' simply other words for 'newes,' 'rheumatism,' 'constitution,' and so on?"

And this after Jenner, Behring, Pasteur! There's an imp for you!

30

How strange that he should like playing cards. He plays in deadly earnest, and gets very excited. And he holds the cards as nervously as if he had a live bird between his fingers, and not just bits of cardboard.

31

"Dickens said a very wise thing: 'You hold your life on the condition that to the last you shall struggle hard for it.' On the whole he was a sentimental, garrulous writer, not very wise. But he could construct a novel like no one else, certainly a great deal better than Balzac. Somebody said: 'Many are obsessed with the passion for writing books, but few are ashamed of them.' Balzac wasn't, nor was Dickens, and they both wrote much that was bad. And yet Balzac was a genius, I mean he was that which can only be called a genius. . . ."

Somebody brought him Tikhomirov's *Why I Stopped Being a Revolutionary*—Lev Nikolayevich picked it up and brandished it, saying:

"Political murder is very well treated here, showing that this method of resistance has no clearly-defined purpose. Such an idea, says this reformed murderer, can never be anything but the anarchical despotism of the individual and contempt for society, for humanity. This is well said but the words 'anarchical despotism' are a misprint, he should have said 'monarchical.' The idea is good and true, all terrorists will trip on it, I am speaking of the honest ones. Anyone who naturally likes to kill will not trip. There is no stumbling block for him here. He is just a murderer, and fell among the terrorists by chance. . . ."

32

Sometimes he is self-satisfied and intolerable, like a sectarian from the Volga region, and as he is a bell which resounds throughout the world, this is appalling. Yesterday he said to me:

"I'm more of a muzhik than you are, and can feel as the muzhiks do better than you."

My God! He shouldn't boast of this, he really shouldn't!

33

I read him some scenes from *The Lower Depths*. He listened attentively, and then asked:

"What made you write this?"

I explained as well as I was able to.

"You rush at things like a cockerel. And another thing—you are always trying to smooth over all the seams and cracks with your own colouring. Hans Andersen says in one of his stories: 'The gilt rubs off, but the leather remains.' Our muzhiks say: 'Everything passes, truth alone remains.' Better not daub, it'll be the worse for you afterwards. And then your language is too sprightly, full of tricks, that won't do. You must write more simply, the people always talk simply, they may sound disjointed at first, but they express themselves well. The muzhik does not ask: 'How is it that a third is greater than a fourth, when four is more than three?' as a certain learned young lady did. There is no need for trick writing."

He seemed to be displeased, obviously he did not like what I had read to him at all. After a pause he said in surly tones, looking past me:

"Your old man is unlovable, one doesn't believe in his goodness. The actor's quite good. Have you read *The Fruits of Enlightenment*? I have a chef in it who is like your actor. Writing plays is very difficult. Your prostitute is good, too, some are like that, no doubt. Have you met that sort?"

"Oh, yes."

"One can see that. Truth always makes itself felt. But you speak too much from the author's point of view, your heroes are not real characters, they are all too much alike. You probably don't understand women, all your women are failures—every one. One doesn't remember them. . . ."

Andrei Lvovich's wife came into the room to call us to tea. He rose and went out very quickly, as if glad to bring the conversation to an end.

34

"What is the most terrible dream you ever had?"

I seldom dream, and have difficulty in remembering my dreams, but two have remained in my memory, and I shall probably not forget them for the rest of my life.

Once I dreamed of a sickly, putrid sort of sky, greenish-yellow, with round, flat stars in it, rayless and lustreless, like sores on the body of a starving man. Red-dish lightning was crawling amongst them against the putrid sky; the lightning was very like a serpent and whenever it touched a star, the star swelled into a sphere and burst soundlessly, leaving in its place a dark stain, like a puff of smoke, and disappearing instantly into the putrid, watery sky. And all the stars burst, one after another, the sky grew still darker and more terrible, and then seemed to mass together, seethed, and fell in fragments on my head, in a kind of watery jelly, while in the spaces between the fragments shone the polished black surface.

L. N. said:

"You must have been reading some scientific work on astronomy, that's what your nightmare comes from. And what was the other dream?"

The other dream: a snowy plain, flat as a sheet of paper, not a mound, not a tree, not a bush, only a twig discerned faintly here and there, sticking out of the snow. Across the snow of this lifeless desert there stretches from horizon to horizon a yellow strip of scarcely perceptible road, and a pair of grey felt boots stride slowly along it all by themselves.

He raised his shaggy, gnome-like brows and gazed attentively at me. After a pause, he said: "That's terrible. Did you really dream it—you didn't make it up? There's something a bit bookish about that, too."

And suddenly he seemed to lose his temper, and said surlily, severely, tapping on his knee with one finger:

"You don't drink. And you don't look as if you had ever been given to drinking. And yet there's something bibulous in these dreams. There was a German writer called Hoffmann, and he had card tables running up and down the street and all that sort of thing—well, he was a toper—a 'calagolic,' as learned coachmen say. Boots striding about all by themselves—that's really terrible. Even if you made it up—it's very good. Terrible!"

He suddenly smiled all over his beard, so that his very cheek-bones were irradiated.

"And imagine this: all of a sudden a card table comes running down Tverskaya Street—you know, with bent-wood legs, its boards flapping, and chalk puffing out of it—you can even make out figures on the green baize. It has run away because some excisemen played vint on it night and day for three days running, and it couldn't stand any more."

He laughed, but he must have noticed that I was a little hurt by his want of faith in me.

"You're offended because your dreams seem bookish to me. Don't be offended, I know how one sometimes unconsciously makes up things which are so strange that one simply can't believe in them, and then one begins to think one must have dreamed them. An old landowner once told me he dreamed he was walking in a forest, and came out into the steppe and this is what he saw: two mounds on the steppe, and suddenly they turned into breasts and a black face rose up between them, with two moons for eyes, wall-eyed, you know, and he himself was standing between the legs of a woman, and there was a deep black abyss in front of him, sucking him in. After this his hair began to turn grey, his hands began to shake, and he went abroad to Dr. Kneipp, to take the waters. That was just the sort of dream a man like that ought to have—he was a debauchee."

He patted me on the shoulder.

"But you're not a drinker, and not a debauchee—how is it you have such dreams?"

"I don't know."

"We know nothing about ourselves."

He sighed, narrowed his eyes and added in lower tones:

"Nothing."

This evening when we were out walking, he took my arm and said:

"Boots walking—gruesome, eh? All by themselves—tippity-tippity—and the snow crunching beneath them. Yes, it's very good. Still you're very, very bookish. Don't be angry—but that's bad, you know, it'll be in your way."

I don't think I'm more bookish than he is, and just now he seems to me an extreme rationalist, whatever he says.

35

Sometimes it seems as if he had only just arrived from somewhere far away, where people think and feel differently, treat one another quite differently, don't even move as we do, and speak a different language. He sits in a corner, weary, grey, as if dusty with the dust of another soil, and he gazes earnestly at everyone with the eyes of an alien or a deaf-mute.

Yesterday, before dinner, he came into the drawing-room looking just like that, as if he were far, far away, and then, sitting on the sofa in silence for a moment, suddenly said, swaying, rubbing his knees with the palms of his hands and wrinkling up his face:

"That's not the end of it, no, no."

Some person, as stupid and serene as a flat-iron, asked him:

"What d'you mean?"

He gazed at him steadily, bending over, and glancing out at the verandah, where Dr. Nikitin, Yelpatyevsky and I were sitting, asked us:

"What are you talking about?"

"About Pleve."

"Pleve ... Pleve ..." he repeated thoughtfully, pausing between the words as if he had never heard the name before, then he shook himself as a bird does and said, with a chuckle:

"Some nonsense has been running through my head ever since the morning. Someone told me of an inscription on a tombstone:

Here lies beneath this stone Ivan Yegoryev,
He was a tanner, soaking skins all day,
He toiled, was kind of heart, and now
He is dead, leaving his workshop to his wife.
He was not old and could have well continued
To soak his skins, but the Lord called him
To partake of heavenly life,
Friday night, the eve of Holy Week.

He fell silent and then, shaking his head, smiled faintly, and added:

"There's something very touching, something quite sweet in human stupidity—when it isn't malignant. There always is."

We were called to dinner.

36

"I don't like drunks, but I know people who get interesting after a glass or two, they acquire a wit, a beauty of thought, an aptness and an eloquence, which they do not have when they are sober. Then I am ready to bless wine."

Suler said he and Lev Nikolayevich were walking along Tverskaya Street, when Tolstoi noticed two cuirassiers in the distance. Their brass breastplates scintillating in the sunlight, their spurs jingling, they strode along in step as if they had grown together, and their faces shone, too, with the complacency of youth and strength.

Tolstoi began abusing them.

"What majestic stupidity! Nothing but animals trained under the lash. . . ."

But when the cuirassiers had passed by he stood still, and following them with an affectionate glance, said admiringly:

"Aren't they beautiful, though! Ancient Romans, eh, Lyovushka? Strength, beauty—oh, my God! How splendid good looks are in a man—how splendid!"

37

He overtook me on the lower road, one very hot day. He was riding in the direction of Livadia, mounted on a quiet little Tatar horse. Grey, shaggy, in his mushroom-shaped hat of thin white felt, he was like a gnome.

He reined in his horse and spoke to me. I walked beside his stirrup, and mentioned among other things that I had just had a letter from V. G. Korolenko. Tolstoi wagged his beard angrily.

"Does he believe in God?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know the most important thing. He believes, but is ashamed of admitting it in front of atheists."

He spoke grumblingly, peevishly, narrowing his eyes angrily. I could see I was in his way, but when I made as if to leave him, he stopped me.

"What's the matter? I'm riding slowly."

And again growled out:

"Your Andreyev is afraid of the atheists too, but he believes in God too, and he is afraid of God."

At the border of the estate of Grand Duke A. M. Romanov, three of the Romanovs stood close together in the road, talking—the owner of the Ai-Todor estate, Georgi, and another—Pyotr Nikolayevich, from Dyulber, I think—all fine, tall men. The road was barred by a one-horse carriage, and a saddle horse. Lev Nikolayevich could not pass. He bent a stern, exacting gaze on the Romanovs. But they turned their backs to us. The saddle horse shifted its feet and moved aside, letting Tolstoi's horse pass.

After riding on for a minute or two in silence, he said:

"They recognized me, the boors!"

And a minute later:

"The horse knew it must make way for Tolstoi."

38

"Look after yourself, first and foremost for your own sake, then you will be doing plenty for others."

39

"What do we mean when we say we 'know'? I know I'm Tolstoi, a writer, I have a wife, children, grey hair, an ugly face, a beard—all that's in my passport. But they don't enter the soul in passports, all I know about my soul is that it craves nearness to God. But what is God? That of which my soul is a particle. That's all. Anyone who has learned to think finds it hard to believe, but one can only live in God through faith. Tertullian said: 'Thought is evil.' "

40

Despite the monotonousness of his preachings, this incredible man is boundlessly versatile.

While talking to the mullah of Gaspra in the park today, he held himself like a trustful country bumpkin for whom the hour to think of his last days had struck. Small as he actually was, he seemed to be trying to make himself still shorter, and standing beside the strong, sturdy Tatar, he looked like a little old man who had only just begun to meditate over the meaning of life and was overwhelmed by the problems it presented. Raising his shaggy brows in surprise, his keen eyes blinking timidly, he dimmed their intolerable, penetrating brilliance. His searching gaze rested motionless on the mullah's broad face, and the pupils of his eyes lost the keenness that people found so disconcerting. He asked the mullah "childish" questions about the meaning of life, the soul and God, capping stanzas from the Koran with stanzas from the New Testament and the prophets with remarkable dexterity. In reality he was play-acting, and that with an extraordinary skill only possible to a great artist and sage.

And a few days ago, talking to Taneyev and Suler about music, he fell into childish raptures over its beauty, and you could see he enjoyed his own raptures—or rather his ability to feel them. He said no one had written so well and so profoundly about music as Schopenhauer, and while he was about it, told a funny story about Fet, and called music "the dumb prayer of the soul."

"Why dumb?" questioned Suler.

"Because it has no words. There is more soul in sounds than in thoughts. Thought is a purse containing copper coins, sound is unsmirched by anything, inwardly pure."

He used touching childish words with evident enjoyment, suddenly recalling the best and tenderest of them. And then, smiling in his beard, he said softly, almost caressingly:

"All musicians are stupid people; the more talented a musician, the more narrow-minded he is. And, strange to say, they are almost all religious."

41

To Chekhov, on the telephone:

"Today is such a delightful day for me, I feel so happy that I want you to be happy too. Especially you! You're so nice, so very nice!"

42

He does not listen to or believe people when they say the wrong thing. As a matter of fact he does not ask, he interrogates. Like a collector of rarities he only accepts what will not spoil the harmony of his collection.

43

Going through the mail:

"They make a great noise, they write, and when I die—they'll say, a year after: 'Tolstoi? Wasn't that the count who went in for shoemaking, and then something or other happened to him?' "

44

More than once I caught on his face and in his glance the sly, satisfied smile of a man who has suddenly come upon a thing he had hidden. He hid something and then forgot the place. For many days he lived in secret anxiety, wondering persistently: where can I have put this thing I need so much? And he feared people would notice his anxiety, his loss, and do something unpleasant, something he would not like. And suddenly he remembers and finds it. Filled with joy, and no longer bothering to conceal it, he looks slyly at everyone, as if saying:

"You can't hurt me now!"

But he says not a word of what he has found, and where he found it.

One never stops marvelling at him, but one would not care to see him too often, and I could never live in the same house—not to mention the same room—with him. Being with him is like being on a plain where everything has been burned up by the sun, and where even the sun is burning itself out, threatening endless dark night.

THE LETTER

Just after I posted a letter to you, came the telegram announcing "the flight of Tolstoi." And as you see I am writing again, while I still feel in mental contact with you.

No doubt everything I feel inclined to say in connection with this news will be muddled, perhaps even harsh and uncharitable—you must forgive me—I feel as if someone had seized me by the throat and was strangling me.

He talked to me a great deal and at length. When I lived at Gaspra, in the Crimea, I often went to see him, and he was fond of visiting me, too. I read his books with earnest attention and with love, so it seems to me that I have a right to say what I think about him, even if this is very bold of me, and if what I say runs counter to the common opinion of him. I know as well as anyone else that there never was a man more deserving of being called a genius, more complicated and self-contradictory, and more splendid in every way, yes—in every way. He is splendid both in the specific and broad sense, in a way which can hardly be put into words at all. There is something in him which always arouses in me the desire to shout to all and sundry: look what a marvellous man there is living on our planet! For he is, so to say, all-embracing, first and foremost a human being—a man in the true sense of the word.

But I have always been repelled by his stubborn, tyrannical efforts to turn the life of Count Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoi into the "life of the Saintly Father Lev." He has been working himself up to "suffer" for a long time, you know. He told Yevgeny Solovyov and Suler how sorry he was that he had not so far brought this off—he did not want to suffer simply from a natural desire to test the strength of his will, but with an obviously—I repeat it—stubborn intention to increase the weight of his doctrines, to make his preaching irresistible, to sanctify it in the eyes of men by suffering, and to compel them to accept it—to compel them, you understand. For he knows very well that his preaching is not convincing enough. When his diaries are published you will see some fine specimens of scepticism, applied by him to his own teaching and his personality. He knows that "martyrs and sufferers are almost invariably tyrants and oppressors"—he knows everything. And yet he says: "If I were to suffer for my ideas they would create quite a different impression." This has always repelled me in him, for I cannot help feeling in it an attempt to coerce me, the desire to dominate my conscience, to dazzle it with the sight of a martyr's blood, to place round my neck the yoke of dogmas.

He has always and everywhere sung paeans to immortality in the next world, but immortality in this world would be more to his taste. A national writer in the truest sense of the word, he embodies in his great soul all the bad qualities of the nation, all the mutilation inflicted on us by the tortures of our history.... Everything in him is national, and his whole preaching is mere reaction, atavism, that which we were beginning to shake off, to overcome..

Remember his letter, "The Intellectuals, the State, the People," written in 1905—what an unpleasant, spiteful thing that was! All through it can be detected the spiteful "I told you so!" of the dissenter. I wrote him a reply at the time, based on his own words to me, that he had "long forfeited the right to speak about the Russian people, and in their name," for I have been a witness of his unwillingness to listen to and understand the people who came to have a heart-to-heart talk with him. My letter was harsh, and I did not post it.

And he is now making what is probably his last leap in the hope of giving his ideas the highest possible significance. Like Vasily Buslayev he has always been fond of such leaps, but always towards the confirmation of his own sanctity and his searchings for a halo. This smacks of the Inquisition, though his teachings are justified by the ancient history of Russia and the personal sufferings of genius. Sanctity is to be attained through the contemplation of sin and the enslavement of the will to live....

There is much in Lev Nikolayevich that has often aroused in me feelings akin to hatred, much that falls like a heavy burden on my soul. His inordinately swollen ego is a monstrous phenomenon, almost abnormal, there is in it something of the Bogatyr Svyatogor, whose weight the earth could not support. Yes, he is great! I am profoundly convinced that, besides all of which he speaks, there is much about which he is silent—even in his own diaries—and about which he will probably never speak to a soul. This "something" only makes itself felt occasionally, tentatively, in his talk, and hints of it are to be found in the two diaries he gave me and L. A. Sulerzhitsky to read. It seems to me something like a "denial of all that has been said"—the most profound and arrant nihilism which has sprung up and developed on the soil of infinite despair and loneliness, which nothing has ever been able to destroy, and which probably no one before has ever felt with such appalling clarity. He has often struck me as inexorably indifferent, in the depths of his heart, to human beings—he is so much higher and more powerful than they are that he regards them as gnats, and their preoccupations as ridiculous and pitiful. He has retreated from them too far into some desert, where, with the utmost concentration of all the forces of his spirit, he regards in solitude the "most important of all"—death.

All his life he has dreaded and hated death, all his life he has been haunted by the spectre of the Arzamas famine—must he, Tolstoi, die? The eyes of the whole world, the universe, are upon him. Living, quivering threads extend to him from China, India, America; his soul is for all men and all times. Why should not nature make an exception from her rules and bestow upon him—alone among men—physical immortality? Of course he is much too reasonable and intelligent to believe in miracles, and yet, on the other hand, he is a rebel, an explorer, he is like a young recruit, wild with fear and despair at the thought of the unknown barracks. I remember once at Gaspra, after his recovery, having read Lev Shestov's *Good and Evil in the Teachings of Nietzsche and Count Tolstoi*, he said, in reply to A. P. Chekhov's remark that he "did not like the book":

"And I found it amusing. Affectedly written, but it's not bad, it's interesting. You know I like cynics if they are sincere. He says somewhere: 'Truth is not required,' and he is quite right—what is truth to him? He'll die anyhow."

And, evidently noticing that his words had not been understood, he added, chuckling gleefully:

"Once a man has learned to think, all his thoughts are bound up with the thought of his own death. All philosophers are like that. And what's the good of truths, since death is sure to come?"

Further he proceeded to explain that truth is the same for all—love of God, but he spoke indifferently and wearily on this subject. On the verandah after lunch he picked up the book again, and finding the place where the author says: "Tolstoi, Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche could not live without an answer to their questions, and any answer would be better for them than none," he laughed, saying:

"What a daring barber, he says straight out that I deceive myself, which means I deceive others, too. This is the obvious conclusion. . . ."

Suler asked: "But why 'barber'?"

"Well," he said thoughtfully, "it just came into my mind that he was a fashionable dandy, and I remembered a barber from Moscow at the wedding of his peasant uncle in the village. Marvellous manners, can dance the lancers, and therefore despises everyone."

I give this conversation almost word for word. I remember it very distinctly, I even jotted it down, as I did everything that struck me. Suler and I made many notes, but Suler lost his on the way to Arzamas, where he visited me—he was very careless, and though he loved Lev Nikolayevich with an almost feminine love, his attitude to him was a little strange, almost condescending. I too put my notes away somewhere and can't find them, they must be in Russia. I observed Tolstoi very closely, for I have always sought, and shall seek to the day of my death, for a man of real, living faith. And also because A. P. Chekhov, speaking of our lack of culture, once complained:

"Look, every word Goethe said was written down, but Tolstoi's voice goes unrecorded. That's dreadfully Russian, old boy! Afterwards people will wake up, and start writing reminiscences full of distortions."

But to proceed—on the subject of Shestov:

"'One can't live,' he says, 'always gazing at terrible visions'—how does he know what one can do and what one can't? If he knew, if he saw visions, he wouldn't write trivialities, he would occupy himself with something serious, as Buddha did all his life. . . ."

Someone remarked that Shestov was a Jew.

"Hardly!" said L. N. incredulously. "He's not a bit like a Jew. There aren't any atheistic Jews—name a single one. There aren't any."

Sometimes it seems as if this old wizard were playing with death, flirting with it, trying to get the better of it somehow: I'm not afraid of you, I love you, I am waiting for you. And all the time his small, keen eyes are peering about—what are you like? And what is there behind you? Do you mean to destroy me altogether, or will something be left of me?

His words: "I'm happy, awfully happy, too happy!" leave a strange impression. And—immediately afterwards: "Oh, to suffer!" To suffer—that, too, is sincere in him. I do not for a moment doubt that, while he is sick, he would be sincerely glad to find himself in prison, in exile, in a word to accept the martyr's crown. Is it that he feels as if martyrdom would somehow justify death, would make it more comprehensible, easier to accept—from the external, formal point of view? I'm sure he has never been happy—neither in the "books of wisdom," nor "on the back of a horse," nor "in the arms of a woman," has he enjoyed to the full the bliss of "the earthly paradise." He is too rationally-minded for that, and knows life and people too well. Some more words of his:

"Caliph Abd-er-Rahman had fourteen happy days in his life, and I don't suppose I ever had so many. And all because I have never lived—I don't know how to live—for myself, for my soul, but have always lived for effect, for others."

As we were leaving, Chekhov said: "I don't believe he has never been happy." I do. He hasn't. But it's not true that he lived "for effect." He always gave to others, as to beggars, of his surplus. He was fond of making them "do" things—read, walk, live on vegetables, love the muzhik and believe in the infallibility of the rational and religious ideas of Lev Tolstoi. You've got to give people something which either satisfies or occupies them, in order to get rid of them. Why couldn't they leave a man alone, in his habitual, torturing, but sometimes cosy solitude, facing the bottomless swamp—the question of "the great thing."

All Russian preachers, with the exception of Avvakum and, possibly, Tikhon Zadonsky, have been frigid people, not possessing an active, lively faith. In my *Lower Depths*, I tried to create that sort of old man—Luka. It was "all sorts of answers," and not people, that interested him. He could not help coming up against people, he consoled them, but only so that they should not get in his way. And the whole philosophy, the whole preaching of such individuals amounts to alms given away by them with concealed disgust, and beneath their preaching can be heard words which are plaintive and beggarly:

"Leave me alone! Love God and your neighbour, but leave me alone! Curse God, love those far removed, but leave me alone! Leave me alone, for I am but a man, and . . . doomed to die."

Alas, life is, and long will be, like this! It could not be and never can be otherwise, for human beings are harassed, tortured, terribly isolated, and all shackled by a loneliness which saps at their souls. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if L. N. were to be reconciled to the church. There would be a logic of its own in this—all men are equally insignificant, even bishops. As a matter of fact, this would not be reconciliation, for him personally this act would merely be a logical step: "I forgive those who hate me." A Christian deed, and beneath it a light, keen mockery, it might be understood as a wise man's revenge on fools.

But I am not writing the way I wanted to, nor about the things I wanted to. There's a dog howling in my soul, and disaster flickers before my eyes. The papers have just come and I can see how it will be. A myth is being created in your part of the world, "once upon a time there were idlers and drones, and they brought forth—a saint." Only think what harm this will do to our country, and at a time when the folk are hanging their heads in disillusion, and the souls of the majority are void and barren, and those of the elect are filled with melancholy. All these hungry, ravaged souls are clamouring for a myth. People are so longing to relieve themselves of pain, to assuage their tortures. And it is just the myth he wished for, and just what is so undesirable—the life of a holy man, a saint—whereas the greatness and sanctity of him is that he is a *man*, a man of maddening, torturing beauty, a man in the true sense of the word. I seem to be contradicting myself here, but never mind. He is a man seeking God not for himself, but for others, so that he, a man, may be left in peace in the desert he has chosen. He has given us the New Testament, and, to make us forget the conflicts within Christ himself, he has simplified His image, smoothed down the aggressive elements in Him and substituted for them "obedience to the will of Him who has sent me." There is no gainsaying that Tolstoi's New Testament is much more acceptable, it suits the "ailments" of the Russian people better. Something had to be given to these people, for they complain, their groans shake the earth and distract mankind from the "great thing." And *War and Peace* and everything in that line do nothing to assuage the grief and despair of the mournful Russian land.

Of *W.&P.* he said himself: "Setting aside false modesty, it is another *Iliad.*" M. I. Chaikovsky heard from Tolstoi's own lips much the same appraisal of his *Childhood* and *Boyhood.*

Some journalists have just been from Naples—one even rushed over from Rome. They ask me to tell them what I think of Tolstoi's "flight"—that's what they call it—"flight." I refused to speak to them. You understand, of course, that my soul is in a terrific turmoil—I don't want to see Tolstoi turned into a saint. Let him remain a sinner, close to the heart of the sinful world, for ever close to the heart of each of us. Pushkin and he—there is nothing greater and dearer to us. . . .

Lev Tolstoi is dead.

A telegram has come, where it says in commonplace words—he is dead.

It was a blow at the heart, I wept from pain and grief, and now, in a kind of half-crazed state, I picture him, as I knew him, as I saw him, I feel an anguished desire to talk about him. I picture him in his coffin, lying there like a smooth stone on the bed of a stream, no doubt with his deceptive smile—so utterly detached—quietly hidden away in his grey beard. And his hands at last quietly folded—they have completed their arduous task.

I remember his keen eyes—they saw through everything—and his fingers, which always seemed to be modelling something in the air, his talk, his jests, his beloved peasant words, and that strangely indefinite voice of his. And I see how much of life that man embraced, how superhumanly wise he was—how eerie.

I saw him once as probably no one else ever saw him. I was walking along the seashore to Gaspra and suddenly, just outside the Yusupov estate, among the rocks, caught sight of his small, angular figure, clad in a crumpled grey suit and crushed hat. He sat there, his chin resting on his hands, the grey hairs of his beard straggling from between his fingers, gazing out to sea, while at his feet the greenish wavelets rolled submissively and affectionately, as if telling their story to the old wizard. It was a day of glancing light, the shadows of clouds crept over the rocks, so that the old man and the rocks were alternately lit up and in shadow. The rocks, huge, with deep clefts in them, were covered with pungent-smelling seaweed—there had been heavy breakers the day before. And he seemed to me like an ancient rock suddenly come to life, knowing the beginning and purpose of all things, and wondering when and what would be the end of stones and grass on the earth, of water in the ocean, and of man and the whole world, from rocks to the sun. The sea was like a part of his soul, and all around emanated from him, was part of him. Plunged in brooding immobility, the old man suggested something prophetic, enchanted, profound in the gloom beneath him, disappearing in quest of something into the heights of the blue void above the earth, as if it were he—the concentration of his will—who was summoning and dismissing the waves, guiding the movements of the clouds and shadows which seemed to be shifting the rocks, waking them. And suddenly I felt, in a moment of madness, that he was going to rise, to wave his hand, and the sea would become motionless, glassy, the rocks would move and cry out, and all around would come to life, everything would find its voice, speak in multitudinous tongues of itself, of him, against him. It is impossible to put into words what I felt at that moment—there was ecstasy and horror in my soul, and then all was fused in the blissful thought:

"I am not an orphan in this world so long as this man inhabits it."

Then, carefully, so as not to rattle the pebbles underfoot, I turned back, unwilling to disturb his meditations. And now—I do feel that I am an orphan, my tears fall as I write—never before have I wept so disconsolately, so hopelessly, so bitterly. I don't even know if I loved him, but what does it matter whether it was love or hate that I felt for him? He always stirred emotions in my soul, vast, fantastic agitation. Even the disagreeable or hostile feelings that he aroused would assume forms that did not oppress but seemed to explode within one's soul, expanding it, making it more sensitive, giving it greater capacity. He was very imposing when, with an imperious shuffle, as if treading out the unevenness of the ground with the soles of his feet, he would suddenly appear from behind a door, or round a corner, advancing upon one with the short, light, rapid steps of a man accustomed to moving constantly over the surface of the world, his thumbs thrust into his belt, halting for a second and casting a searching glance around him, which took in everything new and immediately absorbed its significance.

"How d'you do!"

I always interpreted these words as follows: "How d'you do—I know there's not much pleasure for me or sense for you in it, but, just the same: How d'you do!"

In he came—a little man. And instantly everyone seemed to be smaller than he was. His peasant beard, his rough but extraordinary hands, his simple clothes, all this external cosy democratic look of his, deceived many people, and very often some simple Russian soul, accustomed to greet a man according to his clothes—an ancient servile habit—would let himself go in a fragrant gushing stream of "spontaneity," which might be more exactly designated "familiarity."

"Oh, you dear man! So this is you! At last I can look my fill on the greatest son of my native earth! Greetings, greetings, accept my obeisance!"

That is the Moscow-Russian way, simple and cordial, but there is yet another Russian style—the "free-thinking" style:

"Lev Nikolayevich! Disagreeing with your religious and philosophical views, but profoundly respecting in your person a great artist. . . ."

And suddenly from beneath the peasant beard, the crumpled democratic smock, would emerge the old Russian gentleman, the splendid aristocrat—and the "simple" ones, the educated ones, and the rest, would turn blue from the searing chill. It was a pleasure to see this pure-blooded individual, to note the nobility and grace of his gestures, the proud reserve of his speech, to listen to the exquisite precision of his devastating words. There was just enough of the fine gentleman in him to deal with serfs. And when they summoned into being the grand seigneur in Tolstoi, he appeared before them with easy lightness, crushing them so that they could only cringe and squeal.

I once travelled with one of these "simple" Russians from Yasnaya Polyana to Moscow; it took him a long time to recover his balance, and he kept repeating distractedly with a piteous smile:

"My, what a trouncing! Wasn't he fierce, my word!"

And then he exclaimed ruefully:

"Why, I thought he really was an anarchist. Everybody keeps calling him an anarchist, and I believed them. . . ."

He was a wealthy man, a great industrialist, he had a big belly and a fat face the colour of raw meat—why should he have wanted Tolstoi to be an anarchist? This remains one of the "profound secrets" of the Russian soul.

When L. N. wished to please he could do this more easily than a beautiful, intelligent woman. He is seated in the midst of a varied circle—Grand Duke Nikolai Mikhailovich, the house painter Ilya, a Social-Democrat from Yalta, the Stundist Patsuk, a musician, Countess Kleinmichel's bailiff, the poet Bulgakov—all gazing at him with enamoured eyes. He is expounding to them the philosophy of Lao-tse, and he appears to me like a wonderful one-man orchestra, endowed with the ability to play on several instruments simultaneously—a trumpet, a drum, an accordion and a flute. I, too, gazed at him. And now I long to gaze at him once more—and I shall never see him again.

Reporters have been here, they say a telegram was received in Rome, refuting the rumour of the death of Lev Tolstoi. They made a great fuss and chatter, glibly expressing their sympathy for Russia. The Russian papers leave no room for doubt.

It was impossible to lie to him—even from pity. He might be dangerously ill without arousing pity. It is fatuous to pity people like him. They must be looked after and cherished, the dust of worn-out, callous words must not be sprinkled on them.

"You don't like me, do you?" he asked. And the answer had to be: "No, I don't."

"You don't love me, do you?" "No, I don't love you today."

He was ruthless in his questions, reserved in his replies as befits a sage.

He spoke marvellously about the past, and best of all about Turgenev. Fet, he always mentioned with a good-humoured chuckle, always remembered something comic about him; of Nekrasov he spoke coldly, sceptically, but he spoke about writers in general as if they were his children, and he a father who knew all their shortcomings, but was defiantly determined to make more of the bad in them than of the good. And whenever he spoke derogatorily about anyone I always felt as if he were bestowing alms upon his hearers; it was disconcerting to listen to his criticisms, one lowered one's eyes involuntarily beneath his keen smile—and nothing remained in one's memory.

Once he argued vehemently that G. I. Uspensky wrote in a Tula dialect and had no talent. And yet he said to A. P. Chekhov in my presence:

"There's a writer for you! By the force of his sincerity he reminds one of Dostoyevsky, but Dostoyevsky was given to dabbling in politics and striking poses—Uspensky is much more simple and sincere. If he believed in God, he would be sure to be some sort of a dissenter."

"But you said he was a Tula writer and had no talent."

His eyes disappeared beneath his shaggy brows, and he said:

"He wrote badly. D'you call that language? More punctuation marks than words. Talent is love. He who loves is talented. Just look at lovers—they're all talented."

He spoke about Dostoyevsky with evident reluctance, stiffly, evasively, as though trying to overcome something.

"He ought to have studied the doctrines of Confucius or the Buddhists, they would have calmed him. That is the great thing, which everyone ought to know. He was a violently sensual man—when he got angry, bumps appeared on his bald spot, and his ears twitched. He felt much, but did not know how to think, he learned to think from the Fourierists, from Butashevich and that lot. And then he hated them all his life. There was something Jewish in his blood. He was mistrustful, vain, cantankerous and miserable. It's a funny thing that so many people read him—I can't understand why. After all it's difficult and futile—all those Idiots, Hobbledehoys, Raskolnikovs and the rest weren't a bit like that, everything was much simpler and more comprehensible really. Leskov, now, why don't people read him? He's a real writer—have you read him?"

"Oh, yes! I love him, especially his language!"

"He knew the language marvellously, he could do anything with it. Funny you should like him, there's something un-Russian about you, your thoughts are not Russian thoughts—you don't mind my saying that, you're not hurt? I'm an old man, and perhaps I'm no longer capable of understanding modern literature, but it always seems to me that it is in some way un-Russian. People are writing a peculiar sort of verses—I don't know what these verses are for, who they are for. We must learn to write poetry from Pushkin, Tyutchev, Shenshin (Fet.—*Tr.*). You, now"—he turned to Chekhov—"you're Russian. Yes, you're very, very Russian."

And he put his arm round Chekhov's shoulders with an affectionate smile, much to the embarrassment of Chekhov, who began talking about his house and the Tatars in a bass voice.

He loved Chekhov, and when he looked at him, his glance, almost tender at that moment, seemed to be caressing Chekhov's face. One day Chekhov was walking along one of the paths in the park with Alexandra Lvovna, and Tolstoi, who was at that time still an invalid, sat in an armchair on the verandah, and seemed to go out towards Chekhov with his whole being.

"What a charming, fine man! Modest, quiet, just like a young woman. He even walks like a girl. He's simply wonderful!" he said in a low voice.

One evening, in the twilight, frowning, his eyebrows twitching, he read us a version of the scene from *Father Sergius* in which the woman goes to the hermit to seduce him; he read it right through, raised his head, closed his eyes and said distinctly:

"The old man wrote it well—very well!"

It was said with such exquisite simplicity, the admiration of the beauty of his own writing was so sincere that I shall never forget the rapture I felt then—a rapture I never could put into words, and which it cost me an enormous effort to conceal. My very heart seemed to stand still, and the next moment everything seemed revivifying, fresh, new.

The inexpressible, individual charm of his speech, so incorrect on the surface, with such incessant repetitions of certain words, so saturated with a peasant-like simplicity, could be understood by those who watched him talk. The force of his words lay not only in his intonations and in the liveliness of his features, but in the play and gleam of his eyes, the most eloquent eyes I have ever seen. L. N. had a thousand eyes in one pair.

Suler, Chekhov, Sergei Lvovich and someone else were sitting in the park talking about women; he listened to them in silence for a long time and then said suddenly:

"I shall tell the truth about women when I have one foot in the grave. Then I'll jump into my coffin and hide under the lid—try and catch me then!" And his eyes gleamed so defiantly and terrifyingly that nobody spoke for a few moments.

The way I see it he combined in himself the audacity of Vasily Buslayev and something of the stubborn soul of Father Avvakum, while above all this, or beside it, there hid the scepticism of Chaadayev. The Avvakum element preached, torturing the artist's soul, the Novgorod rogue in him made him denounce Dante and Shakespeare, while the Chaadayev element chuckled over these amusements—and tortures—of the soul.

It was the traditional Russian in him that made him denounce science and the state principle—the Russian driven to passive anarchism by the futility of the innumerable attempts at building life on humane lines.

Here is a remarkable thing: by the force of some mysterious intuition, Olaf Gulbransson, the cartoonist of *Simplicissimus*, discovered the Buslayev feature in Tolstoi. Look at the drawing attentively, and you'll see what likeness there is to the real Lev Tolstoi, what an audacious mind looks at you from that face with the deep-set eyes, the mind of one for whom nothing is sacred, who has no superstitions or idle beliefs.

There he stands before me, this wizard, alien to everyone, travelling alone over those deserts of thought in which he sought in vain for the all-embracing truth. I gaze at him, and though the pain of the loss is great, pride in having seen that man softens my pain and grief.

It was strange to see L. N. amongst the "Tolstoians"; he stands in their midst like some majestic belfry, and his bell tolls out ceaselessly to the whole world, while all around him scamper small, stealthy curs, yelping to the tones of the bell, and eyeing one another mistrustfully, as if to see which of them was yapping best. I always felt that these people filled both the house at Yasnaya Polyana and the mansion of Countess Panina with the spirit of hypocrisy, cowardice, bargaining, and the expectation of legacies. There is something in common between the "Tolstoians" and those pilgrims who traverse Russia from end to end, carrying the bones of dogs which they give out to be fragments of holy relics, and trading in "Egyptian darkness" and the "tears" of the Mother of God. I remember one of these apostles refusing an egg at Yasnaya Polyana out of sympathy for the hen, but devouring meat with relish in the station buffet at Tula, and saying:

"The old chap exaggerates!"

They are almost all given to sighing and kissing, they all have sweaty, boneless hands and deceitful eyes. At the same time these are practical folk, who manage their worldly affairs very skilfully.

L. N., of course, appraised the "Tolstoians" at their true value, and so did Sulerzhitsky, whom he loved tenderly, always speaking of him with youthful fervour and admiration. One day a certain individual related eloquently at Yasnaya Polyana how easy his life had become, and how pure his soul, since adopting the doctrines of Tolstoi. L. N. bent towards me and said softly:

"He's lying, the rascal, but he's doing it to give me pleasure."

There were many who tried to give him pleasure, but I never saw anyone do it really well. He very seldom spoke to me about his customary subjects—universal forgiveness, love for one's neighbour, the New Testament and Buddhism—having evidently realized from the very start that all this was "not for the likes of me." I deeply appreciated this.

He could be most charmingly tactful, sympathetic and gentle when he liked, and then his speech would be of an enchanting simplicity and grace, but sometimes it was quite disagreeable to listen to him. I never liked the way he talked about women—in this respect he spoke too much like "the common man," and something unnatural sounded through his words, something insincere, and, at the same time, extremely personal. It was as if he had once been hurt by someone, and could neither forget nor forgive the injury. On the evening of my first acquaintance with him he took me into his study—it was at Khamovniki—seated me before him, and began talking about *Varenka Olesova* and *Twenty-Six Men and One Girl*. I was depressed by his tone, quite disconcerted, so crudely and harshly did he endeavour to convince me that shame is not natural to a healthy young girl.

"If a girl has passed her fifteenth birthday and is healthy, she wants someone to kiss her and pull her about. Her mind recoils from that which it neither knows nor understands, and that's what people call chastity and shame. But her flesh already knows that the incomprehensible is inevitable, legitimate, already demands the fulfilment of this law, despite her mind. Your Varenka Olesova is described as healthy, but her feelings are those of an anaemic creature—that's all wrong!"

He then began to speak of the girl in *Twenty-Six*, uttering one obscenity after another with a simplicity which I found brutal and which even offended me. Afterwards I realized that he only used these "forbidden" words because he found them the most precise and pointed, but at the time his way of speaking was disagreeable to me. I did not contradict him—suddenly he became kind and considerate, asking me about my life, my studies, my reading.

"Are you really as well-read as they say? Is Korolenko a musician?"

"I don't think so. I don't know."

"Don't you? Do you like his stories?"

"Very much."

"That's because of the contrast. He's a poet, and there's nothing of the poet about you. Have you read Waltmann?"

"Yes."

"A good writer, isn't he? Bright, exact, never exaggerates. Sometimes he's better than Gogol. He knew Balzac. Gogol imitated Marlinsky, you know."

When I said that Gogol had probably been influenced by Hoffmann, Sterne, and possibly Dickens, he shot a glance at me, and asked:

"Where did you read that? You didn't? It's not true. I don't suppose Gogol read Dickens. But you really have read a lot—take care—that's dangerous. Koltsov ruined himself that way."

When he saw me off he put his arms round me and kissed me, saying:

"You're a real muzhik! You'll have a hard time amongst the writers, but don't let anything scare you, always say what you think, never mind if it's rude sometimes. Clever people will understand."

This first meeting created a dual impression on me—I was both happy and proud to have met Tolstoi, but his talk had been rather like a cross-examination, and I felt as if I had seen not the author of *The Cossacks*, *Kholstomer*, *War and Peace*, but a gentleman who had condescended to me and considered it necessary to speak to me in a kind of "popular" manner, using the language of the streets, and this had upset my idea of him—an idea to which I had become accustomed, and which was dear to me.

The next time I saw him was at Yasnaya. It was a dull day in autumn, with a fine drizzle, and he put on a heavy overcoat and high leather boots, regular waders, and took me for a walk in a birch copse. He jumped ditches and puddles with youthful alacrity, shaking the raindrops from the branches on to his head, all the time giving me a brilliant account of how Shenshin (Fet.—*Tr.*) had explained Schopenhauer to him in this very copse. And he stroked the damp, silky trunks of the birch-trees lovingly.

"I read some verses lately:

There are no more mushrooms, but all the hollows
Are fragrant with the damp smell of mushrooms...

—that's good, very well observed."

Suddenly a hare started right under our feet. L. N. jumped up, wildly excited. His cheeks turned scarlet, and he came out with a loud "tally-ho!" Then he looked at me with an indescribable smile and gave a wise, very human laugh. He was admirable at that moment.

Another time, in the park, he looked up at a hawk, soaring over the farmyard, circling it, and then poising motionless in the sky, its wings moving faintly, as if uncertain whether to swoop now, or wait a bit. L. N. was on the alert at once, covering his eyes with the palm of his hand and whispering nervously:

"The rascal is after our chickens! Look, look—now—oh, he's afraid! Perhaps the coachman is there—we must call the coachman...."

And he did. When he shouted, the hawk took fright and flew away.

L. N. sighed and said with evident self-reproach:

"I shouldn't have shouted—he would have gone away anyhow...."

Once, when speaking to him about Tiflis, I mentioned V. V. Flerovsky-Bervi.

"Did you know him?" asked L. N. eagerly. "Tell me something about him."

I began telling him that Flerovsky was tall, with a long beard, thin, big-eyed, wore a long sailcloth robe, with a little bag of rice boiled in red wine hanging from his belt, and went about with a huge canvas umbrella; that he had roved with me the mountain paths of the Transcaucasus, where once, in a narrow path, we encountered a bull from which we escaped by threatening the surly beast with the open umbrella, backing all the time at the risk of falling into the abyss. Suddenly I noticed tears in the eyes of L. N., and broke off in Embarrassment.

"Never mind, go on, go on! It's only the pleasure of hearing about a good man! What an interesting man he must be! That's just how I imagined him—not like other people! He is the most mature, the wisest of all the radical writers, he shows very ably in his ABC that the whole of our civilization is barbarous, while culture is the affair of peaceful tribes, the affair of the weak, not of the strong, and the struggle for existence is a lie invented to justify evil. You don't agree with this, no doubt. But Daudet does, remember his Paul Astier."

"How is one to reconcile Flerovsky's theory with the role of the Normans in the history of Europe, for instance?"

"Oh, the Normans! That's different."

If he had no answer ready, he would say: "That's different."

I always felt, and I do not think I was mistaken, that L. N. did not like talking about literature, but was intensely interested in the personality of the writer. I very often heard his questions: "Do you know him?

What's he like? Where was he born?" And his discussions nearly always displayed the individual from a very special point of view.

Of V. G. Korolenko he said thoughtfully:

"He's Ukrainian, and so he should be able to see our life better and more clearly than we see it ourselves."

Of Chekhov, whom he loved so tenderly:

"His profession spoilt him. If he hadn't been a doctor he would have written still better."

Of one of the younger writers he said:

"He plays at being an Englishman, and Moscow people are no good at that."

He told me more than once:

"You're a romancer. All your Kuvaldas and the rest are pure inventions."

I remarked that Kuvalda had been taken from life.

"Tell me where you met him."

He was greatly amused by the scene in the office of Kolontayev, the Kazan Justice of the Peace, where I first saw the man I described under the name of Kuvalda.

"Blue blood! Blue blood—that's it!" he said, laughing and wiping his eyes. "But what a charming, amusing fellow! You tell stories better than you write. You're a romantic, you know—an inventor, you might as well admit it."

I said that probably all writers invented to a certain extent, showing people as they would have liked them to be in real life. I said, too, that I liked active people, who aspired to oppose the evil in life with all their powers, even with violence.

"But violence itself is the chief evil!" he cried, taking my arm. "How are you going to get away from that, Scribe? *My Fellow-Traveller*, now—that's no invention, it's good, because not invented. It's when you start thinking that all your people come out knights, Amadises and Siegfrieds. . . ."

I remarked that so long as we go on living completely surrounded by inevitable ape-like "fellow-travellers," everything built by us will be built on sand, in a hostile environment.

He chuckled, nudging me gently with his elbow.

"Very, very dangerous conclusions might be drawn from this. You're no true socialist. You're a romantic, and romantics ought to be monarchists, as they always have been."

"What about Victor Hugo?"

"Victor Hugo's different. I don't like him, he's a noisy fellow."

He often asked me what I was reading, and invariably scolded me for what he considered my bad choice of books.

"Gibbon's worse than Kostomarov, you should read Mommsen—he's a great bore, but he's very solid."

When he discovered that the first book I ever read was *Les Frères Zemganno*, he waxed quite indignant.

"There you are—a foolish novel! That's what spoilt you. There are three French writers—Stendhal, Balzac, and Flaubert—you may add Maupassant, but Chekhov's better. The Goncourts are mere clowns, they only pretend to be serious. They learned life from books written by inventors like themselves and they took it all seriously, but nobody needs their writing."

I did not agree with him, and this rather irritated L. N. He could not stand contradiction, and his arguments were sometimes strangely wilful.

"There's no such thing as degeneracy," he said. "It's all an invention of the Italian Lombroso, and the Jew Nordau echoed him like a parrot. Italy is a country of charlatans and adventurers—only people like Aretinos, Casanovas, Cagliostros are born there."

"What about Garibaldi?"

"That's politics, that's different."

When presented with one fact after another from the history of merchant families in Russia, he replied:

"It's not true, it all comes out of clever books. . . ."

I told him the story of three generations in a merchant family known to me—a story in which degeneracy acted with peculiar ruthlessness. Plucking at my sleeve in his agitation, he declared:

"That's true! That I know—there are two such families in Tula. That's what you ought to write about. A big novel in brief—d'you see what I mean? That's the way to do it!"

And his eyes gleamed avidly.

"But some of them will be knights, L. N."

"None of that! This is very serious. The one who becomes a monk to pray for the whole family—that's marvellous. That's real life. You sin, and I'll go and redeem your sins. And the other—the bored grabber—that's true, too. And for him to drink and be a beast and a debauchee, and love everyone, and suddenly commit a murder—how good that is! That's what you ought to write about instead of searching for a hero among thieves and tramps. Heroes are lies, inventions, there's nothing but human beings, people—that's all!"

He often pointed out to me exaggerations which had crept into my stories, but once, speaking of the second part of *Dead Souls*, he said, smiling good-naturedly:

"We're all the most arrant romancers. I am, too. Sometimes one gets writing and all of a sudden one feels sorry for some character and starts giving him better attributes, or tones down another so that the first shall not seem too black in comparison."

And instantly, in the severe tones of an inexorable judge:

"And that's why I say art is lies, deceit, arbitrary stuff, harmful to humanity. You don't write about real life as it is, but about your own ideas of life, what you yourself think about life. What good will it do anyone to know how I see that tower, or the sea, or that Tatar? Who wants to know that, what's the use of it?"

Sometimes his thoughts and feelings seemed to me mere whims, and even purposely distorted, but more often he would strike and subdue his listeners by the austere directness of his thoughts, like Job, the fearless interrogator of the cruel God.

He once said:

"I was walking along the Kiev highroad in the end of May; the earth was paradise, everything rejoiced, the sky was cloudless, the birds sang, the bees hummed, the sun was kindly, and everything round me was festive, human, splendid. I was touched to tears and felt as if I were myself a bee roaming over the loveliest flowers in the world, and as if God were close to my soul. Suddenly what did I see? At the edge of the road, under some bushes, lay two pilgrims, a man and a woman, swarming over each other, both drab, filthy, old, wriggling like worms, mumbling and muttering, the sun mercilessly lighting up their bare, discoloured feet and decrepit bodies. I felt a pang at my heart. Oh, God, the creator of beauty—aren't you ashamed of yourself? I felt very bad. . . .

"So you see the sort of things that happen! Nature—the Bogomiles* considered her the creation of Satan—torments man too harshly and mockingly, she takes away his strength, but leaves him his desires. This is true for all who have living souls. To man alone has it been given to feel the shame and horror of this torture—in the flesh bestowed upon him. We bear this within us like some inevitable punishment, and—for what sin?"

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* A religious sect in Bulgaria.

While speaking, the expression of his eyes changed in a very peculiar manner, sometimes becoming childishly plaintive, sometimes showing a harsh, dry gleam. His lips twitched and his moustache bristled. When he had finished speaking he took a handkerchief from the pocket of his smock and rubbed his face hard, although it was quite dry. Then he passed the hook-like fingers of his strong peasant hand through his beard and repeated softly:

"Yes, for what sin?"

I was walking along the lower road from Dyulber to Ai-Todor with him one day. Striding lightly, like a young man, he said, displaying more agitation than was usual with him:

"The flesh should be a well-trained dog to the soul, going wherever the soul sends it. And look at us! The flesh is riotous and unresting, and the soul follows it in pitiable helplessness."

He rubbed his chest violently, just over his heart, raised his brows, and continued musingly:

"In Moscow, near the Sukharev Tower, I once saw—it was in autumn—a drunken wench. She lay there in the gutter. A stream of filthy water trickled out of a yard right under her neck and back, and there she lay in the cold water, muttering, tossing, wriggling about in the wet, unable to get up."

He shuddered, closed his eyes for a moment, shook his head and went on in low tones:

"Let's sit down here. There's nothing more horrible, more loathsome than a drunken female. I wanted to go and help her get up but I could not, I shrank from it. She was all slimy and wet, after touching her you wouldn't be able to get your hands clean for a month—ghastly! And on the kerbstone near by sat a little greyeyed, fair-haired boy, tears running down his cheeks, sniffling, and bawling helplessly:

" 'Ma-ma-a-a. . . . Get up. . . .'

"Every now and then she moved her arms, snorted, raised her head, and again—down it went into the dirt."

He fell silent and then, looking round him, repeated uneasily almost in a whisper:

"Ghastly, ghastly! Have you seen many drunken women? You have—oh, God! Don't write about it, you mustn't."

"Why not?"

Looking into my eyes and smiling, he echoed:

"Why not?"

Then he said, thoughtfully and slowly:

"I don't know. It's just that I—it seems shameful to write about beastliness. But after all—why not? One should write about everything. . . ."

Tears stood in his eyes. He wiped them away and, smiling all the time, looked at his handkerchief, while the tears trickled down his wrinkles again.

"I'm crying," he said. "I'm an old man, it makes my heart throb when I think of anything horrible."

And then, nudging me gently:

"You, too, will have lived your life, and everything will remain unaltered, and you will weep even more bitterly than I am weeping now, more 'drippily,' as peasant women say. . . . But everything must be written about, everything, or the little fair-haired boy will be hurt, he will reproach you—that's not the truth, he will say—not the whole truth."

He gave himself a thorough shake and said coaxingly:

"Come now, tell me something, you're a very good talker. Something about a child, about yourself. It's hard to believe you too were once a child, you're—such an odd chap. You seem to have been born grown-up. There's much that is childish, immature in your thoughts, and yet you know quite a lot about life—you don't need to know any more. Come, tell me something. . . ."

And he settled himself comfortably on the exposed roots of a pine-tree, watching the fuss and movement of ants in the grey pine needles.

Here, in the southern landscape, so strangely varied to the eye of a northerner, amidst all this luxurious, shamelessly voluptuous plant-life, sits Lev Tolstoi, his very name expressive of his inner force!*—a small man as gnarled and knotty as if he were made of rugged, profoundly earthy roots. In the garish landscape of the Crimea, I repeat, he seemed to be at once in his right place, and out of place. A very ancient man, the master of the whole countryside, as it were—the master and maker, who after an absence of a hundred years is back in an estate which he himself has laid out. There is much that he has forgotten, and much that is new to him; things are as they should be, but not quite, and he must find out at once what is not as it should be and why.

He would walk up and down the paths and roads with the rapid, hurried gait of an experienced globe-trotter, his keen eyes, from which not a stone, not a thought could escape, gazing, measuring, testing, comparing. And he scattered around him the living seed of his incessant thought. He said to Suler:

"You never read, Suler, and that's too bad, it's conceited, and Gorky here reads a great deal, and that's wrong, too—it's lack of confidence in himself. I write a lot and that's not right because I do it from senile vanity, from the desire to make everyone think as I do. Of course my way of thinking is right for myself, though

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* Lev—lion, Tolstoi—stout.

Gorky thinks it's wrong for him, and you don't think at all, you just blink and look round for something to catch hold of. And you catch hold of things which have nothing to do with you—you've often done that. You catch hold and cling, and when the thing you are clinging to begins to fall away from you, you let go of it. Chekhov has a very good story—*The Darling*—you're rather like the woman in it."

"In what way?" laughed Suler.

"You're always ready to love, but you don't know how to select, and you fritter away your energy on trifles."

"Isn't everyone like that?"

"Everyone?" echoed L. N. "No, no—not everyone."

And suddenly he lashed out at me:

"Why don't you believe in God?"

"I have no faith, L. N."

"That's not true. You're a believer by nature, you can't get on without God. You'll soon begin to feel that. You don't believe because you're obstinate, and because you're annoyed—the world isn't made the way you'd like it to be. Some people are unbelievers out of shyness. Young men are like that sometimes. They worship some woman, but can't bear to show it, they're afraid of being misunderstood, and besides they have no courage. Faith, like love, requires courage, daring. You must say to yourself: 'I believe,' and everything will be all right, everything will appear as you would like it to be; everything will explain itself to you, attract you. There is much that you love, for instance, and faith is simply the intensification of love, you must love still more, and love will turn to faith. It is always the best woman in the world that men love, and each one loves the best woman in the world and there you are—that's faith. An unbeliever cannot love. He falls in love with one today, and another in a year's time. The soul of such men is a tramp, it is sterile, and that's not right. You were born a believer and it's no use trying to go against your own nature. You are always saying—beauty. And what is beauty? The highest and most perfect is—God."

He had hardly ever talked to me about these things before, and the importance of the subject, its unexpectedness, took me unwares and almost overcame me. I said nothing. Seated on the sofa, his feet pushed beneath it, he allowed a triumphant smile to steal over his beard and said, shaking a finger at me:

"You can't get away from that by saying nothing, you know!"

And I, who do not believe in God, cast a stealthy, almost timid glance at him and said to myself:

"This man is like God."

TO THE READER

The Foreign Languages Publishing House would be glad to have your opinion of the translation and the design of this book.

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